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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding the offensive language by the Minister of Education, and this is my earliest possible time to do so, since I had to consult with *Hansard*.

According to Standing Order 49, "No Member shall speak disrespectfully of Her Majesty, nor of any of the Royal Family, nor of the Governor or Administrator of the Government of Canada; nor of the Lieutenant-Governor of this Province; nor use offensive words against any Member of this House."

Yesterday, according to *Hansard*, the Minister of Education, in response to my question on school violence stated: If I had the ability to stop people from being jerks, I can tell you I'd do it and I could point in the direction that I would start.

Speaker, while I'm sympathetic to the fact that the minister's own insecurities and lack of understanding of the K-to-12 system probably caused her to make this –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: – and other remarks, the fact remains she resorted to insults, and not particularly good ones, in answering the question on a serious issue. Whether the minister was directing the comment at students, at Members of the Opposition in general –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't hear the Member speaking.

J. DINN: – or me in particular, in the context of debate referring to another person as a jerk is offensive, unacceptable of Members of the House of Assembly and unbecoming of the Minister of Education.

Based on previous rulings on points of order, the Speaker considers the tone, the manner, the intention of the Member speaking. The Speaker also considers the person to whom the words are directed, the degree of provocation and whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber.

Unfortunately, Speaker, the minister's comments indicate an intent to offend. Earlier, the minister stated that she wished she was naive enough to live in a world where the Member opposite lives, to think that a one-size-fits-all approach to fixing it. Obviously, it was an attempt to disparage my professionalism and experience as a teacher.

Speaker, I would never presume, nor have I belittled her professionalism as a nurse, but I will stack my 32 years as a classroom teacher and four years as president of the NLTA and vice-president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation against her experience in the classroom.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: Based on the jeering, the shouting and the immature behaviour of some of her caucus colleagues, Speaker, you can only conclude that the minister's comments were designed to create disorder and interfere with my ability as a Member of this House to carry out my duties and ask questions.

Speaker, I do not envy your role in maintaining decorum. If you were to comb through *Hansard* recordings you would be hard pressed to find an example where my colleague from Labrador West, or I, or even our previous leader, Alison Coffin, engaged in this type of behaviour.

In my 32 years in the classroom, even my most challenging classes were better behaved, demonstrated more respect and exhibited more common decency than what was and is currently being showed by certain Members on the government side. Frankly, it is behaviour unbecoming of this House.

I ask that the minister retract or clarify her use of the word “jerk.”

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I just briefly want to comment, having heard the point made this morning and the words that were, I guess, in question. Certainly, in my quick hearing of them this morning, it doesn't sound like they were directed at anyone in particular. Certainly, no names were used and certainly no Members of the House were referenced in those comments.

I do find it ironic that the Member is talking about name calling of Members in this House and, at the same time, said that the Minister of Education is insecure.

I can say that I try to teach my children two wrongs don't make a right. I'm not sure what he taught for 32 years, but if he taught that, we have big problems in our education system and I probably know where they came from, Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll take the point of order under advisement. I will review *Hansard* and also the webcast and report back to the House at a later time.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise also on a point of order under Standing Order 49, and if you review *Hansard*, which came available last evening so I'm just speaking to this now, the Member for St. John's Centre, during the exchange yesterday said: Speaker, we brought this up before and the world I live in, I've lived that life, unlike the minister. I would say right now, instead of pulling out students from the water, they're probably drowning them.

Speaker, while it maybe an analogy and so on, it was a heated exchange, no question, but I think the suggestion that my colleague is somehow drowning students, even used in this way, I would say is definitely a very serious and an inappropriate allegation.

I would also ask that the Member for St. John's Centre withdraw his remarks.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It is indeed unfortunate that there seems to be little grasp of context nor of metaphor. The comment that was made was in reaction to this and following on this: It's one thing to stand and look at a student and wonder why they fell in the water, but this government is going to go upstream and figure out why they fell in the first place. That is the context in which that statement was made. It was also an extension of the metaphor that, again, the minister herself encouraged.

Now I will withdraw that, but I will tell you one thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: I will tell you one thing, Speaker. In the context of that, it was following that, it was not a standalone comment and I find it a little bit bothersome that it was brought up. But if it's considered offensive, I will withdraw it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Again, I will take that under advisement and report back to the House this afternoon.

Government Business

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, that notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 20, 2024, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 20.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, that An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act, Bill 98, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 98 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act." (Bill 98)

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

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

I'll just take a few minutes to introduce the bill this morning in the second reading. I'm going to start off by thanking ArtsNL for bringing this forward to us and I thank their board and staff. I thank Dave Brown, the chair of the board, and Melanie Martin, who is the executive director, for their work in working with us on this bill and facilitating consultation with their users and with the arts community throughout the province.

Speaker, created in 1980, the Arts Council fosters and promotes arts in Newfoundland and Labrador and, obviously, works to encourage public awareness of the arts. This act is over 40 years old, Speaker, and needs a refresh. They've done tremendous work and they continue to do tremendous work. That's why we're bringing this forward this morning.

This process included a comprehensive questionnaire targeting various stakeholders, consultation with other stakeholders as well and, again, all with the help of ArtsNL. We also took the opportunity to engage with Indigenous organizations and collect specific information and insights on the needs of Indigenous artists and incorporate Indigenous ways, learnings and

knowing into the practice of arts in our province.

One of the biggest challenges ArtsNL has been facing over the last number of years is recruitment of board members and the barriers to participation in the board. I think one of the main things that this bill will actually do, Speaker – and through the consultation we heard this loud and clear – is previously board members were not allowed to receive funding for their projects as artists. Obviously, Speaker, everybody in this House and anybody involved in the arts community would realize that professional artists rely on organizations like ArtsNL for their funding.

One of the most significant changes that this will make is this will allow artists to actually be board members and participate in that and also receive grants.

That being said, Speaker, we realize that this requires safeguards and there are safeguards that we will put in place in order to eliminate conflicts of interest. One of the things that we will do as we move forward with this legislation and the regulations is remove board members from the juries.

So what happens when an artist makes a submission to a specific fund, the board actually approves the global amount of said fund, but they do not approve individual applications. Those individual applications are approved by a jury of their peers who wouldn't be involved in that pool. Previously, board members would have sat on juries, but in order to facilitate this change to the legislation, board members will no longer sit on juries.

As well, this brings us in line with other jurisdictions. All other jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada, for example, have already made this change, because as you could appreciate, the limitation that it brings by saying to an artist you can't participate on the board if you want to receive funding.

Some other changes that we'll make, obviously, are we will be making general language changes like we always do. We will be doing some incorporating of the Indigenous pieces of what we found.

The other thing that we will be doing is we will change the composition of the board. Previously, it was an artist board, now it will be seven of the up to 11 members of that board will be artists. This also gives us an opportunity – and we heard this from ArtsNL as well – to start to bring in some – give the board, give government the opportunity to appoint people who bring different aspects of governance to a board, for example, lawyers, accountants, other different skillsets that successful boards need. This is modernization.

Hopefully, this will do a number of things, mainly give us the ability to attract more people to sit on the board of ArtsNL.

Speaker, again, I thank everybody at the department for the work on getting this bill to where it is today. I thank ArtsNL and look forward to this bill proceeding through second reading this morning.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to stand in this House and represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially when it comes to our Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

Today, what we're discussing is Bill 98, the Arts Council amendment. I appreciate the work that's been done by the department and their officials for the simple fact that after 40 years things do need to be modernized. There are things that are

cleaned up, I guess, in the definition and things like that, but as the minister alluded to, the biggest thing about this piece of legislation is the fact of the board and the composition of the board, to understand that if you're a board member you're not eligible for funding is kind of limiting, I guess, who we have to offer as board members because you'd have to be somebody like Shanneyganock to be able to be on the board, because you're already established and you don't need granting or funding.

AN HON. MEMBER: A fine crew they are.

J. DWYER: And a fine crew they are. A shout-out to my buddies, Chris and Mark. Keep up the good work.

But like I said, when it comes to our Arts Council, we have so much to offer here in this province. We bat way above our weight when it comes to the arts. We have lots of great artists, both in our urban area and our rural area, which I would allude to about our board because I think that would be an opportunity for us to go one step further and make sure that we include board members from rural Newfoundland because the offerings in rural Newfoundland are a little bit different than in the urban area of St. John's or the Northeast Avalon, just based on theatres, availability of venue and stuff like that.

When it comes to arts, as I said, we bat well above our weight and it's something that's been really growing in the last short time in this province. It's so good to see. There are lots of different areas, I guess, that bring it in, it's from performance arts to film arts, the visual arts, dance and literary arts. These are all seen under the Arts Council and this is the pool that we get to choose from to make these board members.

Any organization is only as good as the board running it. I'm very encouraged to find out that if you're on the board, you can't be on the jury. Therefore, there's no conflict of interest when it comes to approving funding,

because while it might not be the board member that's applying for funding, they may have some kind of conflict of interest when adjudicating that application on behalf of another colleague kind of thing.

So I really like what we've done there. There's a couple of things that really make sense because the board is the one that approves the expenditures. So if we don't have responsible people on the board, then, basically, our whole Arts Council falls apart.

I appreciate the people that have stepped up in the past to be on the board and I look forward and thank people in advance for stepping up to be on Arts Council board going forward because it is a very burgeoning piece of our economy and there's a trickle-down effect again. I talk about that all the time.

When we have a good arts availability, you know, like the Grand Bank Theatre, it's growing leaps and bounds in the last few years, but it's because of the support that they're getting from the two Members on the Burin Peninsula. I commend my colleague on the other side from Burin - Grand Bank for supporting the arts. While it's a field that I've participated in, I'm not sure if my colleague has, but, again, that's what we're trying to do on the Burin Peninsula is work together for the betterment of everything on the Burin Peninsula.

The thing is, we want to go a little bit further and we want to make sure that we're, certainly, setting this up correctly so that once we set it up, there's no collusion or no conflict of interest or anything with the funding and stuff like that because government funding is very much needed to help this burgeoning Arts Council and our artists themselves.

I encourage everybody out there in our arts department, I guess, kind of thing, that part of the Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, it's a big part of that department so I encourage anybody to get out and

support the arts for the simple fact that without bums in the seats, the arts really don't get to thrive so get out and probably step outside your comfort zone and go see a show. It doesn't necessarily have to be at the Arts and Culture Centre. It could be a little show that's being played at the Persistence Theatre or it could be being played at the Grand Bank Regional Theatre.

In the meantime, we are moving in leaps and bounds. Last summer, I got to experience *Come From Away* out in Gander and I thought the way it was set and everything was great. So we are moving in the right direction. I do commend the department on bringing this forward to make sure that our arts are not left behind or not losing their momentum because it is building and building and building and it's great to see.

When it comes to the board, having a board member from each different facet of the arts is important because then what we're doing is we're bringing in, I guess, the think tank of all the different – now there's going to be some overlapping of what each different art needs. But in the meantime, what we're doing here is we're cleaning up 40-year-old legislation that is going a little bit further now to make sure that we're doing things in the right way.

Like I said, the purpose of the bill is to modernize the *Arts Council Act* by updating the definitions, revising council composition and member criteria, enhancing transparency through conflict of interest provisions and incorporating inclusive and gender-neutral language.

I will say that to have the lens of transparency on this is the way we should be doing all legislation. It should be able to be understood by everybody not just lawyers and the people who understand the jargon and stuff like that. This is the people's House. When we make legislation in here, it's to affect the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and its people.

What we're trying to do here is take a very burgeoning, as I said before, sector of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and supporting it in a way that it needs to be supported.

It's great that we got to this point. Bill 98 seeks to amend the *Arts Council Act* to update definitions, adjust the council composition, integrate gender-neutral language and implement conflict of interest guidelines when it applies to funding of board member, which is very important because we have to get rid of any conflict of interest. We all are under that guise, there's nobody in the province that gets to be under a conflict of interest and get away with it.

I think that's something that the transparency will tell us and it will be something that will make us run a little smoother going forward. But, again, now that we have board members that will be able to apply for arts funding, I think that will open up the pool. I would imagine there'll be many applications not just trying to fill positions or trying to find people to fill positions. I think now with this new expansion of this legislation, it gives both younger artists and older artists and burgeoning artists an opportunity, but also an opportunity to be on the inside and help shape and mould our arts council and how we see arts moving forward in the near future. I also believe that this legislation helps us as a Legislature, but it also helps the board to understand and be able to create an opportunity for many members.

What I would suggest is, as I said before and I alluded to before, what the arts look like in an urban area and what the arts look like in rural Newfoundland are very different. That includes our burgeoning Indigenous artists; they have such great things to offer. I just took in a show not long ago at the Arts and Culture Centre and it was performed by Indigenous women. I thought it was tremendous. It was eye opening for sure. I felt that it was certainly part of the whole

truth and reconciliation to take it in because it was very much geared towards that.

I've been in the arts, from performing to, obviously, being a consumer of the arts. But in the meantime, I think that after being in that atmosphere and being in that community, you understand how helpful everybody is to each other and – as we say in here lots of times – there is no silver bullet. So it is good to have many different minds around that table, as we're doing here with the board in order to get those different ideas and think tanks and thinking outside the box and see where we can go because if we're not looking at moving forward, then being stagnant doesn't really create a burgeoning economy.

These amendments address operational inefficiencies and aligns the act with contemporary practices. Bill 98 represents a comprehensive effort to modernize the *Arts Council Act*, ensuring inclusivity, accountability and operational efficiency.

A couple of the key points that I noticed through the technical briefing was the definition of an artist and arts administrator is updated and they're providing more inclusive criteria. The membership on the council will be capped at two consecutive terms and a term limit of three years per team. I think some of this kind of came from COVID as well, because when we couldn't meet and stuff like that in person, it opened up other ways for us to meet and to make sure that we're still moving forward and operating.

The minister will issue conflict-of-interest guidelines concerning funding decisions and prohibiting council members from serving on funding committees. So as the minister alluded to, if there is a conflict of interest, the minister and the department is going to step in and let them know that there is a conflict of interest. We're going to keep an eye on that for sure.

As the shadow Cabinet minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, I feel it is my duty to make sure that we're on top of that as well. So like I said, right now if you're a board member, you can't be on the jury that's adjudicating the applications; therefore, that just eliminates a big conflict of interest. It also initiates the fact that we can get many more people that would be interested in being on the board.

While they can apply for it right now, until we bring this into legislation, this amendment – which I do agree with and I will support. If you're a board member and you're not eligible to apply for funding, it kind of eliminates you if you're not already an established artist. So when we talk about artists, obviously, we kind of go to thinking about visual artists or musicians or anything like that.

But there's so much more to our Arts Council that it covers. Film is a big one for here in Newfoundland; I mean, we have the most scenic routes. I'll give a shout-out to my colleague from Bonavista for having a Disney film that was shot in his district.

Like I said, we're moving in the right direction; the department is very much on top of things. They ask me sometimes why I don't have any questions. It's because I work well with the minister, I guess. We worked well together before when he was in other different departments. That relationship has carried on and it's because of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has nothing to do with us personally or anything like that.

With that being said, if we're not willing to lay down the swords and work with each other, then the province is going to stay stagnant. I'm here to work with anybody that wants to help the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think that my colleague from Ferryland last night in our debate pegged it really good: nobody has the silver bullet.

That sticks with me because I use that all the time. I don't think anybody has all the answers. But I think that if we all come around the table, like we're doing with this board, and taking many different minds, we'll get to a better understanding of fruition, instead of thinking that we know it all and I'm going to throw this at you and see if it sticks. We're not pulling spaghetti here, we're making legislation.

Like I said, the other regulation-making authority shifts to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, removing regulatory powers from the Arts Council. So that's another big step in the right direction. Like I said, that autonomy for making decisions comes down to the minister. I think that might be something we'll discuss in Committee when I get to a few questions. Like I said, for the most part, my take on it is that I appreciate the department bringing this forward.

I also know that the Arts Council is appreciative of this going forward because it modernizes the council, it gives us a greater opportunity to succeed and it gives us a greater opportunity to support our artists throughout our province. Like I said, we should have a little bit of a different lens, maybe, on it from urban to rural. But other than that, what the Arts Council is doing here is certainly setting us up for success in the province.

So the amendments strengthen governance and streamline council operations, while enhancing transparency in funding decisions. By restricting council members, the legislation mitigates potential conflicts of interest. The redefined role of the minister in issuing conflict of interest guidelines, further centralizes administrative oversight, which could increase operational efficiency, but might reduce the council's autonomy.

So, again, I'm glad that this is on the floor of the House of Assembly and I look forward to Committee. I want to commend the people in the department for their due diligence in putting this together. Also, when we get in

Committee, I'll want to discuss who was consulted, who weighed in and why we got to this point at this time in our history.

Like, I said, I want to thank the minister for bringing it to the floor of the House of Assembly and I look forward to questions in Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Just a bit there. I'm glad to see that some of these changes are making – I know, speaking with artists and that. Thanks to all the artists in this province who work in a very precarious industry, going from grant to grant and project to project. It is important that we make sure that they all have the ability for funding when they can get their grants and that. To serve on the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, like I said, you forego your ability to go for grant work. With the makeup of how the board currently is, there's a majority of them have to be artists on the board.

This is great that they're going to make these changes, that they will be able to find a way to not have conflict, but also to actually attract more artists to sit on the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. If you sit on the council as it currently stands, you won't be able to apply for grants, and artists – that's what they heavily rely on when they're doing their work and making their living. A majority of the artists in this province, that's their bread and butter for the most part.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, created in the '80s, governs ArtsNL, a Crown corporation. Its purpose is to foster, promote and create products of work, the study and enjoyment of those works and to engage public awareness of the arts in this province. The primary

function of ArtsNL is to develop and administer grants programs for professional artists, organizations, community groups and schools. This is the only grant-giving agency for individual artists in the province right now. That's a very important thing they have to establish, but also the changes will help alleviate that.

The current composition of our Arts Council: the council currently has a maximum of 13 members, 10 of whom must be artists. But those 10 individuals can't apply for grants right now, as it is. So that's 10 artists that either have to have some other kind of income or some other form – if they're retired or something like that. It kind of makes it really hard to recruit anyone right now that is on the council.

It prohibits a member of council from serving on a committee that makes decisions (inaudible). We talk about the artists and the importance of art in this province. Also, we want to foster more artists, we want to make sure that we have the ability to send that art out into the world and globally to show people and showcase the uniqueness of this province.

When it comes to art in this province we have probably one of the biggest displays of art, but also the biggest different types of art. You stop and think about it, just in Labrador alone between Innu, Inuit, Labradorian, then you work your way down the Northern Peninsula. There are all different types of art; there are all different forms of art.

We have probably one of the biggest tapestries of different types of art. We're a mosaic of different cultures that all blend together in this province. It's important that we make sure that ArtsNL and the Arts Council have the tools and ability to make sure that those artists have access to grants, access to funding to continue that work. We don't want it to stop; we want to improve it and expand it as much as possible.

We talk about arts funding and things like that. It's one of those things that sometimes doesn't get the full view that we hope for. We'll always encourage it, us here in the NDP caucus. We'll continue to always encourage them and ask government to make sure that the arts are more than adequately funded; it has all the funding and tools and everything at its disposal. To continue to make beautiful pieces of art and to show our culture and our diversity and to show that we're a very, very interesting place to the world.

We punch well above our weight when it comes to visual arts, photography, music and everything that goes in between. Like I said, even sculpting and everything in between, all of that, we do punch well above our weight on the Canadian stage and on the global stage.

Having the ability to make sure that the board that is behind a lot of it has the abilities and the tools, those who are on the board can continue their art and not have to forgo these grants, but also make sure there is conflict of interest stuff in place so that they can still be able to work but also serve on a very amazing board that does amazing work for the cultural fabric of this province.

I don't think we give enough praise to those artists and the people who are out there with the creative minds to showcase their talents but also showcase the place that they call home, which is Newfoundland and Labrador. It's very nice.

Art is a very important part of a society and one's well-being as well. It's just nice to have, it's nice to hold. It's also nice to just sit and ponder the story of that piece of art.

Once again, we do support these changes to the Arts Council. We support the artists of Newfoundland and Labrador and we thank the minister for bringing this forward and Arts NL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council for suggesting these changes, but we want to keep supporting

artists. We want to make sure that they have all the tools in the toolbox they need to stay funded, because this is a piece-by-piece kind of industry. It's precarious work. Sometimes they go from grant to grant and little in between, so we need to make sure they're supported, they have all the tools that are necessary to continue the funding.

I've read about a funding program that Ireland has recently undertaken where they're doing a pilot on basic income for artists, to keep them for longer so they're not going from grant to grant. That's something that I throw over to the minister responsible for Arts NL. There are some pilots going on in Ireland to make sure that their funding is topped up so they can continue to work year-round and not have to worry about if their grants are going to run out and things like that. I'll throw that over to the minister to ponder on.

It's a great piece of work and we can learn from other jurisdictions as well. All in all, though, when it comes to the actual artists we have in this province, bar none, we're punching well above our weight and we're doing a fantastic job, but I think, right now, this is a good piece of legislation to help further that.

Once again, I thank the artists of this province for the amount of work that they do.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation speaks now he will close debate.

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to thank the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and the Member for

Labrador West for their remarks this morning on Bill 98, the amendment to the *Arts Council Act*.

The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue talked about the need for regional representation and that's always something we put a lens on because he's absolutely correct. The arts community is spread right across Newfoundland and Labrador. I know, previously, we have had representation from the West Coast and Labrador and we will certainly be looking for that again. Our current complement is way down and that's one of the reasons we want to get this legislation passed.

If anybody is listening this morning, there is an ongoing intake process right now with the Independent Appointments Commission so if there are people interested, please put your name forward. This is a very worthwhile organization that does a lot of great work throughout our province.

Speaker, just in conclusion, this is a legacy piece for Year of the Arts. Year of the Arts has been a tremendous success throughout our province leading a lot of great projects. If you think about some of the things that are happening right now and what the arts community can bring to our economy, the Member opposite talked about *Come From Away*. Just yesterday, we announced season three for *Come From Away*, what that's actually done for the economy in Gander has been absolutely amazing for that investment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: Thousands and thousands of people are coming to watch that show, filling up hotel rooms, supporting the hospitality industry and that's the kind of creation, that's the kind of economic impact that the arts community can have on our economy. So let's never underestimate, not only the social and health benefits of art, but also the economic benefits and what it can bring to an economy.

Again, I thank the Arts Council and staff and board members for their work on this piece of legislation. This will be a new tool for them to help modernize their organization.

Thank you to the staff at TCAR for the work that they did throughout this process to get this piece of legislation ready and the arts community for their involvement, for taking their time – 83, I think, submissions from the online questionnaire on this. We heard, and I think we've done our best to incorporate, what the arts community asked for in this piece of legislation, the changes.

One of the things we heard loud and clear is that they wanted to make sure that the majority of these board members were still professional artists. I think we've achieved that; seven of 11 will have a designation as a professional artist. Again, we will make sure that the disciplines are represented here as we go forward.

Speaker, I look forward to some questions in Committee and I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 98 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 (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act. (Bill 98)

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

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

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 98)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act.

SPEAKER: And a seconder for the motion, please.

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

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 the Whole to consider Bill 98.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Arts Council Act." (Bill 98)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's always good to go into Committee and ask questions on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially our artists that this new legislation will be affecting.

Minister, on the composition of the council, it says that we're going to have nine to 11. I think that might need to be cleaned up because we can't have 10; we can't have an even number. So you say it's nine to 11, but if it stops at 10, we're kind of going down a path of ... you know what I mean?

So I just want to make sure that we said it was either going to be nine or 11, instead of nine to 11.

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

S. CROCKER: Yes, I appreciate the question, but, in reality, that's not uncommon in boards. Boards are often subscribed in that way. I'll just get an answer from the department on why it was done that way, but that is a normal

composition of a board; it is a range and often there is an even number in that range.

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

J. DWYER: Can the minister outline why these changes are coming at this time and can we get a list of people that were consulted from outside the department?

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

S. CROCKER: Yes, it's coming at this time simply because there was a request that came forward from Arts NL. We meet quarterly with Arts NL, with the chair and the executive director to talk about their priorities and this was one of their priorities.

As I said in my opening, this legislation is 40 years old. The Arts Council was started in 1980 and it just needed to bring us up in a line with other jurisdictions and to modernize, so this was a piece of modernizing.

Many things have changed in the last 40 years, if you think about ensuring that we have the proper representations from different groups, any balance, making sure that we incorporate the proper Indigenous artist properly in this with respect.

That's why it's coming forward now. It's something that was needed and it being the Year of the Arts, we thought this was a good opportunity to, actually, do this legacy piece of legislation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to talk about this piece of legislation today. One of the things that I'm so pleased that the department has been working on is to

enhance the support for Indigenous artists around this province.

There have been a number of things that have happened in terms of – one of the pieces of art that has been funded, I believe, is *The Forgotten Warriors* which is produced by Noel Joe in Conne River. There are other people who are doing books and things like that. Some Members of the House have had an opportunity to see *Our Voices*, which was a play about Indigenous artists.

So I just want to ask the minister: How is the department and the Arts Council working with Indigenous leaders, Indigenous groups to bring about such a rebirth in the Indigenous arts in this province?

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister for that question.

It's an important one because, to the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue's previous question, we talked about why we do this. One of the reasons we do this after 40 years is to ensure that this legislation is revised and defines arts and artists to ensure that Indigenous artists see themselves reflected in the act and their contributions to the arts community.

I know Arts NL has done tremendous work with the Indigenous communities. They have an Indigenous person on their staff that actually is dedicated to Indigenous art and making sure funding is finding it's way –

(Disturbance.)

S. CROCKER: Arts NL continues to do work around Indigenous artists and making sure that Indigenous art products are properly funded, properly displayed as they should be. You spoke of work that was done this year through Year of the Arts funding and that was one of the things that we

wanted to ensure is that those contributions are reflected in this legislation and in our communities as we move forward.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Minister – both ministers, I guess – for your question and answer.

Before I go any further, I'd like to mention that today is my colleague's birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: The Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis is turning 35 today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Anyway, I digress. I would also pass along another birthday wish but we have to wait for him to come back in the room.

When it comes to the Indigenous piece, I really do appreciate where we're going with that because in my opinion, and it's only my opinion, I guess, but our Indigenous artists have so much to offer. It's not only in their art but it's in their tradition. It's bringing forward – it's keeping traditions going. From net making to paint, to sculptures, to everything, it's just so tremendous. We have it on display here in the hallways of our Confederation Building. It's such a great opportunity for our Indigenous community to show off their wares. I will always say that there is so much greatness to offer there.

I'm glad that this legislation is going to include everybody and make sure that funding goes to every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It being the Year of the Arts is very important and to recognize that is very important, and to have this legislation coming in during the Year of the Arts,

speaks to how important the Year of Arts is for the simple fact that it made people talk. It made our arts community really step up and be noticed, like I said, from conferences that are coming here to films being made, everything, it's tremendous.

The other thing I would ask the minister is: Were various stakeholders consulted on this legislation, and what did they have to say about it? What were some of the think tank ideas?

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the Member for the question.

Part of the consultation was anonymous, which is necessary as well, an anonymous questionnaire that was sent out. I think we had 83 responses.

But back to the Indigenous question as well from both Members, we did targeted consultation as well. We did targeted consultation with our arts organizations, whether it be the dedicated ones that represent each discipline, they were given the opportunity and Indigenous governments were also given the opportunity to have direct consultation into this piece of legislation.

Sorry if I didn't get all your question there.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Actually you answered a question I was going to ask later about the targeted surveys, that there were 83 from many different disciplines, from many different parts of the Arts Council and community. I appreciate that.

You said that this was done through engageNL, Minister?

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

S. CROCKER: Sorry, through engageNL? I'd have to confirm that.

Just back to an earlier question you had, I did receive confirmation that the logic in the nine and 11 is that it is odd numbers. Obviously, I know there's another number in between there, but that's why it's nine and 11.

J. DWYER: But in the legislation it says nine to 11. If we said nine or 11 –

S. CROCKER: No, that's typical. Boards are typically done in a range.

J. DWYER: Okay, thanks.

CHAIR: I ask that you wait until I identify you, because the red light is not on.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Sorry, Madam Chair, I'll wait my turn. I'm just thinking this conversation is kind of the relationship that we have, so sorry about that.

CHAIR: Do you have a question?

J. DWYER: Yeah, okay, I'm going to ask another question.

The legislation repeals section 3.1 and replaces with a new 3.1. There are some specific word changes in this, like a professional artist is no longer mentioned; income is no longer a factor; replaced with words like intention to develop; and recognized as an artist by a person's peers. Why is there a change in this language?

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

S. CROCKER: My apologies, 3.1?

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

J. DWYER: Yes. Paragraph 5(b), I think.

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

S. CROCKER: Sorry.

So that would be around the process of the grants and the granting and giving artists the opportunity to actually sit on the board and receive grants. That's the piece that we discussed earlier.

That's my understanding. If I'm wrong, I say to the Member that somebody in the department will clarify that for me.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Why the reduction in the size of the council from 13 to no fewer than nine and not more than 11, with the majority being artists, themselves, on the board?

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

S. CROCKER: Again, that's something we received feedback on in consultation, was trying to maintain a board of up to 13 is challenging. Anybody that's involved in boards right now will realize that board representation and board engagement and board recruitment is never easy.

Through the consultation, through *What We Heard* and through talking to ArtsNL, we felt that that was a comfortable number. It was important that seven of that maximum of 11 would be artists, because one of the things we did hear clearly from the arts community is that they wanted to maintain a solid majority.

The number in the consultation was typically found to be around 66 per cent or two-thirds to be artists, so it was important that we made sure that that is there. By having at least seven artists on that board, you certainly have a really strong opportunity of having almost all disciplines represented at the same time.

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

J. DWYER: I think the thing is that the two are not mutually exclusive. So I think that the thing is now that the rules have changed, that an artist can apply for funding while not being in a conflict of interest, I don't think we'll have any issue on getting board members. I think that the 13 could be maintained but in the meantime, with that being said, we have such a vast province. As long as the majority are from that part of the economy, I guess, or the whole council and who they oversee, I think that it'll give us a greater opportunity to have board members.

With that being said, is there a selection committee for the board members themselves? How do you get selected to be on a board?

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

S. CROCKER: That would be done through the Independent Appointments Commission. I think, in my earlier remarks I talked about it's an ongoing intake. If you went to the Public Service Commission website right now, you would see that there's an intake.

We want to get this board back in place. There are currently five members, and that's extremely challenging. Arts NL wants to get this back, get their board back to its full complement. They're a very busy organization so this legislation is important for us to give them the tools to get back there and move forward quickly to make

sure that representation is there and that we're getting the funding out to help our artists.

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

J. DWYER: I understand what you're saying here, Minister, and I would encourage anybody listening this morning that if you're interested in the arts and you're not necessarily from a different discipline, but if you have interest in the arts, then step in and see where we can take this to in the future. It's a very important part of not only our economy, but our whole culture. That's a big piece for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

That's a thing that we're looking at, where the artist piece of the department is creeping into the culture piece of the department. I think that's what distinguishes us as artists here in this province is the culture that we draw from to produce our wares or our arts.

Why no longer is there any geographic representation? What rationale was used for this decision?

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

S. CROCKER: Well, I think every single board that the IAC or the Public Service Commission looks at geography is always, always a consideration. Again, you need to be cognizant when building a board because if you're too prescriptive in a location, you don't get anybody. Then you have a board that's not functional. That was the concern.

The main reason we're here this morning, the main request that Arts NL had to us as a government was to bring forward legislation that allowed them to actually fill their board out. It's challenging when you're working on a board that it's having a lot of influx, people

moving in and out, leaving for different reasons.

The biggest factor certainly was the fact that a professional artist couldn't apply for funding. If you're a professional artist, no matter where you are in this country – and I would argue, in the world – seed funding is an extremely important building block into moving further along. Really, the reason we're debating this legislation today, with a sense of getting it done, is so that Arts NL can have the ability to get out, we can get our recruitment done and we can get a new complement in there as quickly as possible to make sure that they're fulfilling their mandate.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

That seems to be the right direction to take this, Minister. I appreciate that because when our artists are trying to get something produced or trying to bring their wares to the world, it's always the upfront, sunken costs that kind of holds back an artist. So I really do appreciate our support for the arts because, like I said, it's the upfront money that gives them a chance to get out of the gates in a professional manner and they're not struggling or they're not behind the eight ball all the time. So I appreciate that.

We agree that the members be reimbursed for their expenses for meetings, but can you explain what the difference will be now that it isn't on the scale of expenses for public servants but at the discretion of guidelines established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council?

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

S. CROCKER: I appreciate the question, but I'm going to have to get back to the Member and I'll get some clarification on it.

CHAIR: No further questions?

J. DWYER: I've got one more.

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

J. DWYER: My last question still has to do with the board. The members are limited to two consecutive, three-year terms. Continuity is something we talk about all the time in the arts, but for the continuity of the board, would there be staggered elections where if we're going for 11, we'd do five one year and six the next or anything like that? Because that might give us more availability and opportunity to choose from a pool of people that would like to be on the Arts Council.

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

S. CROCKER: Yes, that's a really good point. Unfortunately, when you find yourself in a situation that we find ourselves in now with up to six vacancies – yes, we're going to have six appointees, hopefully, at about the same time. But typically, no, there are people expire and any time we're looking at building a board, continuity and knowledge is important.

It's also important to have term limits, in my opinion, certainly because that way we're changing people throughout the system. I think that's important, too, to have that ability to move people in and out, change expertise, make sure that one discipline is not heavier weighted to another. So I think that's just good board governance.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I couldn't agree with that more, Minister. I think that's a really positive move in the right direction and it's going to help a lot.

One of the things in clause 4 that really is good for us, too, is with the council's composition, it ensures the residency in the province for council members and it introduces guidelines for leadership roles, including the chair person and the vice-chair.

I think in having that language cleaned up, it really lets people know what their roles and duties are when it comes to the council and weighing in on different things. But to oversee the jury and oversee the expenditures of the Arts Council is a very important role for the board and I think that is something that they will take very seriously, as they have in the past.

As for getting the money out the door, as long as that's done in a timely manner, there is no real holdup or delay to our artists. We all know that when you have a bright idea as an artist, you want to run with it today; you don't want to until you get some funding to run with it. While you do make notes and you keep it within yourself of your competitive advantage and your opportunity that you see, without the funding and without that opportunity, sometimes it just doesn't get out of the gate.

So a lot of our artists are hand tied to not getting funding or getting funding so we want to make sure that the funding that's going out the door is something that's been drawn in from the burgeoning economy in the arts. Like I said, I think that reinvesting in the arts is what's making our arts burgeon here in the province. I thank the minister for that; I thank the department.

I will just say that I really appreciate that this is being brought forward after 40 years and being cleaned up. It's a benefit to the province, it's a benefit to our artists, it's a benefit to any government of the day, but again it is overseen and there are checks and balances when it comes to conflict of interest, when it comes to board composition, when it comes to the jury. If there is any conflict of interest at the end of

the day, what happens here is that it's the Lieutenant-Governor in Council and the minister himself or herself, whoever is the minister of the day, that will have the final decision on what is conflict of interest.

I don't think that's overstating the office itself. I think that there's always going to be somebody there that's hopefully going to make the right decisions, I guess. I can't speak for anybody else, but I know if get the opportunity I'll certainly make sure that I'll be listening to all our councils, all our boards and make sure that we're listening to the boots on the ground so that we can improve our economy through our arts.

Congratulations, I will say on my closing, to all of our artists for making this year, the Year of the Arts, such a great success.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

S. CROCKER: I thank the Member for his questions. I know there was one question I haven't got an answer yet, but I assure him I will get him that answer, if not this morning, sometime later this afternoon.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of questions here. Under the definitions for artists and that, performance arts comedians were left out. Is there a reason why comedians were left out from the definition of artists in this particular one?

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

S. CROCKER: I'll seek clarification, but my understanding would be they would be captured under another part of the performing arts, because they're certainly not left out. I know it's something that we've

funded in the past and we'll continue to fund. But I'll get a clarification on why that specific –

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: I thank the minister for looking into that for me.

Could the minister also elaborate on some of the different artist groups that he consulted with when drafting up this legislation?

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

S. CROCKER: All artist groups would have been given an opportunity to have input in this. It would be all of our provincial bodies that would have been given an opportunity. Again, a lot of the process was facilitated by us in Arts NL and the opportunity was given.

The opportunity went out as an anonymous questionnaire, as well, because we wanted to give people an opportunity to be honest and fair on their opinions, but we did seek input from our arts organizations, from all of them. I can't tell you exactly which ones did actually submit but they were all certainly given that opportunity.

We have that ongoing dialogue with our arts anyway, at all times, not only when we're doing a piece of legislation. I mentioned earlier, we met quarterly with Arts NL, obviously as a representative body of the arts community in the province and the funder, and we always give them an opportunity to be heard.

Your earlier question about comedians, they would fall under the performing arts category.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay. So just for clarification, they would apply as performing arts and that's a broader thing. They are captured but just not in the definition that way. Okay, perfect.

A lot of artists have been speaking out and they've come to us, as well, talking about the issues regarding artificial intelligence in the arts world. We're wondering why it wasn't addressed currently under these amendments or is it going to be addressed in other amendments? A lot of artists are worried about their work being exploited by the capture of artificial intelligence.

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

S. CROCKER: I fully appreciate the question from the Member, I understand it and I hear it constantly. I think in a lot of ways that's a lot bigger question. That's one that's going to have to be really focused on by the federal government to come in and really look at how we look at artificial intelligence as we go forward and copyright and proprietary properties and stuff. It's a big question.

Really this piece of legislation today is about giving the arts community, giving Arts NL, the ability to structure its board and modernize the legislation, but I think we will grapple with AI in maybe every single facet of our lives as we go forward. It's something that we certainly hear and we'll certainly be representing artists on it.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Just one last question. The council currently has the power to make regulations to approve by Lieutenant Governor respecting information to be provided to applications for grants and the procedure to follow in applying for grants and the given grants. The purpose of section 16 only deals with

the regulation-making authority for conflict of interest.

Where will the regulation-making power now lie for grant application procedures? I worry that the new wording will just create a bit of ambiguity about who gets that power.

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

S. CROCKER: It's certainly not created in that manner. That power will still rest at Arts NL. I'm very proud to say that it's our government, this government, that, since 2019, moved Arts NL from \$2 million a year annual funding to a stable \$5 million a year in annual funding. But that envelope of funding is provided annually to Arts NL and, rightfully so, Arts NL has no more accountability, other than the proper distribution of that funding, we have no other say in that funding and that won't change.

So the change that will happen with the jury and the fact that Arts NL members are coming off the juries, for example, if there's an emerging artist fund that has, for argument's sake, \$100,000 in it, the board of Arts NL would approve the global number of \$100,000, but then how that's distributed to individual artists is a decision of the juries. The juries, again, will not have board members.

I think there's a very strong accountability here and kudos to Arts NL, they've always operated in a very, very, very responsible manner. I have full confidence in the work that they're doing.

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

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, on page 3, under specialized training, there's a second bullet: apprenticeship. That annotation to apprenticeship got me thinking, what about

craftspeople? I'll highlight some of the examples across my district: knitters, quilters, carpenters. I even have a knife-maker out in Middle Arm. A lot of their works are made for practical purposes, but become, afterwards, pieces of art.

What is the intent then in looking at that, in incorporating craftspeople into and being recognized as artists? Because art is in the eye of the beholder.

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the Member for the question. It's a very good question and it's a question that we often debate.

Currently, crafts in this province fall into the Department of Industry. Numerous conversations with the Craft Council – because I agree with you, crafts in many, many, many forms are a form of art. That's an ongoing conversation.

When you fall over in, for example, an eligibility in the Department of Industry, that opens up opportunities for you. If you move over to the arts side, that opens up opportunities for you. But I think it's which side do you – not picking sides, but I'm trying to explain. It's where your industry has a better opportunity for stronger supports.

We work with craft and we recognize the value of craft. That's an ongoing debate. Every time we meet with the Craft Council, we see ourselves as artists, but we also see ourselves as an industry. So currently ArtsNL doesn't fund craft, but IET does.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those in favour, 'aye.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 8 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 8 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 8 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 Arts Council Act. (Bill 98)

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 resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 98 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 98 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 98 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 98 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, second reading of Bill 87, An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, and that is seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 87 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners." (Bill 87)

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I am pleased today to discuss Bill 87, An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners.

There are currently two nursing regulators in Newfoundland and Labrador. The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador regulates licensed practical nurses under the *Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005*. The College of Registered Nurses of NL regulates registered nurses and nurse practitioners under the *Registered Nurses Act, 2008*. The College of Registered Nurses will also regulate registered psychiatric nurses when amendments to the *Registered Nurses Act, 2008*, made already by Bill 84 in this sitting, comes into force on January 1, 2025.

In December 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services received correspondence from the board of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses and the Council of the College of Registered Nurses, indicating both their desires to establish a single nursing regulator in our province.

This bill is being introduced as a result of collaboration between the department and both colleges. The primary mandate of both colleges is to protect the public. A single regulator would reduce the siloed approach to nursing. Cost savings and efficiencies have been noted in other jurisdictions where there has been a move to one regulator; however, this is of secondary consideration after public protection.

The bill will repeal the *Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005* and the *Registered Nurses Act, 2008*. It will replace them with the *Nurses Act*. The *Nurses Act* has a similar structure to the two statutes being repealed. It creates the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Nurses, which will be responsible for regulating the entire nursing profession in the public interest.

The new college will have responsibility for, among other things: licensing and registration; setting standards; managing a complaints and discipline program; and managing a quality assurance program.

LPNs, RNs, registered psychiatric nurses and nurse practitioners will all be regulated under this new act.

The *Nurses Act* establishes the board of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Nurses. The composition will be nine members, elected from and by registrants; two members appointed by the minister to represent the public interest; two additional members appointed by the board to represent the public interest; and a member appointed by the minister from a list of nominees knowledgeable in education programs for registrants.

Speaker, the *Nurses Act* has been drafted to reflect the updated procedures, organization structure and language present in similar provisions of more recently updated legislation regulating health professionals in our province. This includes, for example, providing for specific representation of the different categories of registrants on the disciplinary panel and on adjudication tribunals.

As I noted during second reading of the amendment of the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2, where a similar change was made, the expectation will remain that the complaints authorization committee will be formed of board members, where possible, and non-board members will only be part of the CAC, where required. For example, when the committee requires specialized knowledge that council members do not have.

This act would no longer provide specific powers and duties to a director of professional code conduct review, as is the case in the *Registered Nurses Act, 2008*. Rather, it would leave these powers and duties to the registrar or delegate, as is consistent with other health profession statutes in our province.

The *Nurses Act* also provides that, where it is in the public interest, the registrar may suspend or restrict a registrant's licence while awaiting action from the CAC. The act

also increases fines to be more reflective of other health profession's statutes.

The bill updates regulation-making authority and provides additional regulation-making power for the college to establish, with the approval of the minister, specific categories of persons who are not required to be licensed in Newfoundland and Labrador to practice in the province.

The bill includes consequential amendments to clean up references to the college in the act and other legislation, as well as to include nurse practitioners in other legislation where appropriate. Transitional provisions are also included to allow for a transition from two regulators to a single regulator without disruption. Significant work and stakeholder engagement has been ongoing to ensure a smooth integration and transition to a single regulator.

During the development of this bill, the department consulted extensively with both colleges who are supportive of this bill. The colleges have consulted with the Registered Nurses' Union, CUPE and NAPE and informed the department that no issues with the consolidation had been flagged. NLHS is aware of the consolidation and have not noted any concerns. The colleges have discussed the concept of consolidating into one regulator with their registrants, who generally view consolidation in either a neutral or positive light.

If approved, the act will come into force on April 15, 2026. The delay is to allow the colleges to undertake the necessary work to merge operations. It is anticipated new regulations will be developed and will come into force when the bill comes into force.

Similar to what is currently the case with both colleges, the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Nurses will have regulation-making authority under this act, and keeping with the current process, regulations require the approval of the

minister. The department will work with the existing regulators on the development of these new regulations.

It is important to note the distinction between this bill and Bill 84. As noted, this bill, Bill 87, will repeal the Registered Nurses Act and the Licensed Practical Nurses Act and will replace them with one *Nurses Act*. However, before this repeal and replace happens, Bill 84 will come into force to allow the College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador to first regulate psychiatric nurses without having to wait for the consolidation of the colleges in April 2026.

Bill 84 will allow for a smooth and organized consolidation of both colleges into a single regulator. This will allow for economies of scale, which are anticipated to increase the ability to regulate the nursing profession and the efficiency of the colleges' process, all with a view to improving public protection. These efficiencies will also result in cost savings, while I noted already are secondary, they're still worth mentioning.

I am pleased to introduce this bill and I look forward to all Members supporting it in this House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

As I always say, it's always a good time to speak on any legislation in House. We're not going to speak in great length on this. Actually, we met with the College of Registered Nurses, I guess a few weeks back, before the sitting of the House. I'll give credit where credit is due. The college said that when the current minister took over the portfolio, they requested a meeting with him and he obliged. They expressed their desire

to have this legislation changed and to be streamlined like we're doing, bringing it all under one body.

After the meeting, to his credit, he told me he would do what he could to make this possible. At the time, I was not aware of the legislation and when and where and how it would get through the system. So I spoke to him several weeks back and, at the same time, it was hopeful that it was going to happen this fall.

I credit the minister with that and I'm sure the college appreciates that as well, because things don't move through government, as we all know, quickly. So you might want to capture that moment. I'll give the minister thanks on this one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: You can frame that, and all of his staff for making it happen because I do know –

AN HON. MEMBER: Stay tuned.

B. PETTEN: Yeah, stay tuned.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: This afternoon is coming. Yes, that's right.

But I do know that the college are very thankful for this and they were very concerned, I guess. They wanted to get this done and I respect that. I think what it does is it shows respect for all these bodies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: LPNs and registered nurses, now we have registered psychiatric nurses and nurse practitioners, they all do amazing work in this province. We should be so thankful for what they do and we should be trying to support them in every avenue, every way we can. I know that licensed practical nurses felt that they were being

treated differently because they were in a separate silo, as the minister referred to, they're separate from the registered nurses, and nurse practitioners are also feeling left out in another group. Bring them all together under the one umbrella, under the college, makes a lot of sense.

I know probably a lot of the legislation they're working on; they need time to do their own internal work before this bill comes into effect.

I'm familiar with the rationale behind it and that's why I'm not planning on spending a lot of time debating it because I think they were happy to see this come to the floor today, get debated and get passed so they can get to work and put this bill into action for all involved.

I guess, I'll sum it up succinctly in that they're all health professionals. They're very important. They're very respected and we thank them for everything they do for the people of this province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I just wanted to say this is a good piece of legislation. This is something that the nurses and the nurse practitioners wanted. This new proposed merged college would be one of the largest health care regulators in the entire province with over 10,000 members. So this would be a substantial body to look after registered nurses, nurse practitioners and, after January 1, 2025, registered psychiatric nurses. This would be a large governing body that would encompass the entire nursing profession.

This is something that both the RNs and NPs wanted. It's something that looks like it

would be a good piece of legislation, a good amendment and it will create a governing body that would probably help streamline a few services and help us govern, and probably with retention and a bunch of other things.

I thank the minister for this legislation, this current member and the former ministers, who all shepherded this through.

We have nothing more on that. We just have a few questions in Committee on this.

Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to just stand and have a few words on Bill 87. I'll definitely be supporting the bill itself. I can go through it, but there's no need, the minister did a great job of it.

The issue I'd like to bring up here is when you get a licence, the nurse practitioners, they do help a lot in the health care system, but the biggest concern on the West Coast is the lack of family doctors and the emergency department.

There are a group of licensed practical nurses who want to serve the public. We were talking about the cost of living earlier this week and how we could help out. So when these nurse practitioners, when they get licensed, they want to out and expand their skills and they want to help the public. They see a need in the public. For some ungodly reason that no one has yet to explain to me or explain to the people on the West Coast, when you get registered to do your duties and you could fill a void, why they can't be able to bill MCP or the government. There's no one who can explain it to me.

When we talk about the cost of living for seniors, a lot of seniors do go to the nurse

practitioners, we're talking \$50, \$60; some of them just go to get prescriptions filled, some of them have to do a follow-up. If some of them go to visit once a month that's \$500 or \$600 net that they have to pay because this government will not allow the nurse practitioners to bill the government.

There's a lack of family doctors on the West Coast. I read one last week, and I got a note on that again today, about how that person has been notified that they can't get a family doctor. I'm sure it's not just the West Coast. I'm sure it's not. I'm sure it's all around the province, but we have a group of nurse practitioners who want to help fill the void.

Here we are, bringing in Bill 87, An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners – here's the act that we're bringing in so we can govern them, make sure there is good governance around that and everybody is going to support this, yet we're not allowing them to go out to the public and fill the void.

I hate to say this, but it's almost like they're saying we have to wait until this Health Accord plan works out five or six, seven years down the road. There's going to be a lot of suffering in between and people are going to pay a lot. Some can't afford to go, so go to the emergency department.

This is what's happening. There has yet to be one person – and I challenge anybody over there, the minister, anybody, the Deputy Premier who's always talking about the cost of living for the seniors. Here's the seniors paying it on a daily basis when they have to go visit. Not one person has yet to stand up and give a reason to the people on the West Coast why nurse practitioners cannot bill the government – not one. They can't do it.

It can be done with a stroke of a pen, Minister. They're not leaving the hospital short. They're doing this in the nighttime and on the weekends to fill the void. The

former minister said we have to make sure the hospital setting, that we need enough nurse practitioners there. They're not leaving. They are not leaving the hospital. This is on their own time, on the weekends.

There hasn't been one person from government, not one, the Premier included, who is a doctor, explain to me why that can't be done to alleviate the need for lack of doctors on the West Coast. Alleviate why the seniors, mainly seniors, a lot of young people too, why they have to pay, when you go to a family doctor, you don't have to pay.

I'll tell the minister this: The emergency room in Corner Brook is in a crisis. Bar none, it's in a crisis. I have letters here today again on that. One on a stretcher for days, been taken out of the room, put in a hallway, and then, when it's nighttime, they're put back in just a closet room; back out in the hallway again with people going forward, where the police had to come and drag a few people out of the hallway. This is the email. I'm going to send it to the minister later. The person gave me permission to send it to the minister.

The emergency room in Corner Brook – and I'll say it again, because the Member for Corner Brook is here. The Member for Humber - St. George's District, people from your area are there. There are people from Deer Lake, from the Premier's district, there. People from Humber - Bay of Islands are there. A lot of them are there because they can't get any access to care. They can't get it.

Here we are, we're not going to solve the emergency issue overnight by allowing these nurse practitioners to bill, but I can guarantee you it will take away a lot of pressure. I can assure you that, on numerous occasions, if I never heard it 100 times, I never heard it a thousand times: Why do I have to pay? My doctor just left – last week, I read about a doctor and why she left her family practice. There are people just crying and saying I can't afford

it. I got to go get blood work, I got to go back for a follow-up, then I got to go back for pills. That's \$180 out of a senior's pocket.

AN HON. MEMBER: No relevance.

E. JOYCE: Someone is over there saying call relevance. That's something to say now, me talking about health care and the seniors in Corner Brook.

Why doesn't the Member stand up? Why doesn't the Minister of Tourism stand up if you want to talk about relevance? You stand up.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair.

S. CROCKER: I did not say relevance. (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Let me tell you, if you want to say it, you stay up. So this is a serious issue and it's something, for some reason, this government will not address.

When you want to talk about it – and I see the Deputy Premier over there shaking her head. I'll bring this up every time I can because you don't know the people that I know that are suffering. If you did, you'd be the one standing up here today with me on this.

When you want to stand up and say across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador we're doing so much, and here we are denying many people, mainly seniors, access to health care who can't afford it – denying it. There has been not one person, not one minister has yet to stand up from Health and explain why it can't be done.

I said it again and I'll keep saying it, the emergency room in Corner Brook is in a crisis. What do we hear? Oh, we got the Health Accord. We're building this big structure on somebody else's land, so far.

What are they saying in Corner Brook? Oh, well, you've got to give us time. What are you going to do in between that? What are you going to do with an 87-year-old lady who's in the emergency in Corner Brook – 87 years old – and there for 27 hours? What are you going to do? What are you going to do with the people who can't get their prescriptions filled? Where do they go?

They got to go to the emergency room, and there are lineups after lineups on that. I could go all night on this, but I ask the minister: Give the people of Western Newfoundland – it's just not the Humber - Bay of Islands; the Member for Corner Brook should be getting the calls. I'm sure he is, and I know the other two Members are getting them also, because a lot of them from Pasadena are in the emergency room.

If you want me to show the emails, I'll show you the emails. I'm sure you're getting them. I know you're after getting the phone calls because they're telling me they're after calling you. I know it. I've said, call your own Member. Yeah, we called him. Well, stand up and support the people who represented you. That's what I say.

I'm not here to try to embarrass the government. I'm trying to say here's a solution that we could put forward to a lot of people in Western Newfoundland. It will save money for a lot of people, the seniors. It would ensure that they got access to health care. It would alleviate the emergency rooms where a lot of people just got to go there to get a prescription filled or try to get a driver's licence filled out or something. The reason why they're going, Mr. Speaker. They are desperate.

Many people if we can't do some things will say, oh, we'll find another way. But when your health is involved, they are desperate, I'll say to the minister. I mean desperate. As a doctor, the Premier must know – and I'm sure he does know that when it comes to health care, the anxiety for people with

health care and their health care issues is paramount to anything that goes on in life.

We can argue here in this House but once we hear someone is sick, once we hear someone has a medical issue, we all come together because that's paramount, our health. But on the West Coast, for some ungodly reason, we refuse to help out people. Even the officials from the department were out and they spoke to the Chamber of Commerce and one of the quotes that they made is that we got issues with the emergency rooms. We do, but here's a chance to help out people.

So I'll say to the minister: Give me a logical reason why it can't be done. I'll say to the Premier: Give me a logical reason why it can't be done. I'll say to the Deputy Premier: Give me a logical reason. You're touting all the time: Look what we're doing for seniors. Here's what we're not doing for seniors, and we could do it.

Do you know how long it would take to allow nurse practitioners to bill patients? However long it takes you to sign your name, that's it. It can be done.

AN HON. MEMBER: They don't want it.

E. JOYCE: Who don't want it?

AN HON. MEMBER: Unions.

E. JOYCE: Unions? Listen, let me tell you something. You're talking to the wrong union people if you think that nurse practitioners are saying to you: Don't let us bill the people.

I'll tell you what I'll do, Minister.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair, please.

E. JOYCE: Pardon?

SPEAKER: Address the Chair.

E. JOYCE: I'll tell you, Speaker, what I'll do for the minister. How's that?

SPEAKER: Thank you.

E. JOYCE: I'll bring you out and meet the president of the nurse practitioners and I'll let him tell you, to your face, that they want it. Let me tell you.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: I can't hear what you're saying.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: I can't hear what you're saying.

AN HON. MEMBER: He resigned from the association.

E. JOYCE: He might have resigned, but I'll bring you out to the people who have the business set-up. I'll bring you out.

I'll even tell you something better. I'll bring you out to the emergency department and watch the people go through in the nighttime who can't afford to go to nurse practitioners and let you make the decision.

I can tell you, from my understanding, they want it. They want it done. So I don't know who you're talking to, but I can tell you, it is not the ones who are dealing with the residents on the West Coast, I can assure you that.

Speaker, I'll tell the minister, I'll bring you out to the emergency department, if you don't think it's in a crisis; I'll bring you out and introduce you to the nurse practitioners, if you don't think that they're filling a good role. I'll bring you out and you ask them to their face: Should we be billing the government? I can assure you they'll say yes.

I'll bring you out to meet the seniors who can't afford to go there. That's what I'll do, Minister. If you think that this is something

that someone might not want it. Make the decision to help the people on the West Coast. I'll say it again, and I'll keep repeating it every chance I get, the emergency department in Corner Brook is in a crisis – a crisis, bar none. If you want to hear the stories that I hear and get the emails that I know the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation gets, the Premier gets and the Member for Corner Brook gets, they know it. I can assure you they know it.

I'll say again, I'll offer the Minister of Health and Community Services to come out and meet the people who are directly involved, the people who are supplying the services nighttime and on the weekends, I'll bring you out and meet them. I'll show you the services that they're providing, that people now have to shy away from because they can't afford it. They got to get their prescriptions filled. They can't afford it. They just can't afford it. I can't say it any plainer.

What we're doing is we're making everybody herd into the emergency department where there are people on stretchers. In the nighttime, people are put in closets, moving the brooms, putting them in the closets. People are bringing their own chairs and blankets – bringing their own chairs and blankets – to lie on the floor. I just don't know why government is doing this. I don't know why government doesn't allow people to have the best services they can have in Western Newfoundland.

I say to the minister and I say to the government, even if you put it in place now, until you set a ceiling of a number of family doctors that we got on the West Coast, then cancel it, that's fine. But right now, I know of three doctors who left the West Coast, family practitioners – three. That's what I know. There's a fourth one, sorry, four that I know. Where is that void going? It's going to the emergency department. That's where it's going. That's exactly where it's going.

There's one doctor out there in Corner Brook who sees, I think, 50 patients a day. Many of the people go there because they can't afford to go see a nurse practitioner. You may need to see them three or four times because of blood work. Once you get the prescription, you may need a follow-up to see if it's working.

Do you know what they have to do? I give the doctor credit for doing this, by the way. They got to line up starting at 6 in the morning, line up outdoors. Hopefully, they'll be one of the 50 that's going to be on the list to be seen today. That's what they do. I know people who stand up outside starting 6 in the morning. Hopefully, they're going to see a doctor because they've got no other way. They got nothing else.

Seniors standing up outside. If it's raining, hopefully you got a good umbrella or a good rainsuit. If it's snowing, hopefully you got a good winter coat on. That's what's happening. That's real, Minister. That's real on the West Coast.

Here again, we've got an opportunity to alleviate some of that but we're not doing it. We all here swore an oath that we're going to stand up and we're going to do the best we can for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm sure every person in this room has got the intent to do that, I'm sure of that, but for some reason, once we get into the part of government, all of a sudden, we can't make that decision or we don't want to make the decision or feel that there's wrong information coming to them.

There are people actually suffering. There are people lining up at 6 in the morning. Name one person in this room, right now, out of the 40 of us, name one person in the room who had to line up at 6 in the morning to wait until the door is open at 8. Name one. None of us experienced it. None of us experienced it, but it's real. It's happening out there. It is real.

So we have to do something and we have to build as a legislator to do it. My role is to bring this up. The government's role is to fix it. It's an easy fix. I'll say to the minister – I'm not sure, understanding that they don't want it – they don't want it.

Well, let me tell you. I don't agree with that. I really don't, but I can tell you one thing. Here's the deal, I can tell you, I'll stand up against any union whatsoever, I'll be out front and centre, any union whatsoever who does not allow something like the nurse practitioners to bill government so they can alleviate the concerns and the health care of people, I'll go front and centre with you. You won't have to stand up alone against any of that. I'll be with you.

I'll be out in front because the people need it, and to say that we can't make the decision. We can. We can. I can assure you I do not know one legislator in this room here today that would have the courage to go to the seniors and say: I'm not going to stand up for you today. They don't want it so you stand in the rain at 6 in the morning and hopefully you'll get in or go for 25 hours at the emergency and stay there.

Who wouldn't do that for their constituent? Who wouldn't stand up against whoever wants to stop that? Who would it be? You know who it would be? No one. I can tell you I am sure you will get everybody in this room to support that if you allow the nurse practitioners to bill government to take the pressure off the seniors and take the pressure off the emergency room.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Thanks to the Members for CBS, Lab West and Humber - Bay of Islands for commenting here during second reading on this.

We can talk about nurse practitioners and all nurses in this province, really, because they're so important. I was happy to attend the convention for RNU at some point this week and just say what I said to them is that nurses are the heartbeat of the health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I did tell them, of course, there are some bumps along the road here in health care, and they've had to face some bumps as well, but we're working really hard to smooth the bumps now and for the future because we need nurses – all nurses.

This one regulator, which is what we're talking about today, that's one thing. That's about the regulation of the profession but, really, the general public, what they care about is getting good, quality health care. That includes from doctors and other allied health professionals but, front and centre, are nurses, front-line workers. I want to thank them right now for everything that they do throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: On the issue of nurse practitioners, it's been raised in this House before. Just to let everyone know, there's an ongoing survey with nurse practitioners being done in conjunction with the department and the RNU, just to better understand the service delivery models that they want.

All I can tell the Member for Humber - Bay of Island is that I've met with the president of the RNU and heard her opinions and expressed her position on behalf of her union, and that's what I've talked about here in the House as well.

Certainly everyone is free to their opinion and to debate that about how health care service should be delivered in this province. I talk to family physicians all the time about what model works. Is it blended capitation? Is it fee-for-service? Is it salaried physicians? People want different things. What we need to do now, going forward and into the future, as we're modernizing health care, is to listen to people who want flexibility in how they work and how they live and how they deliver health care to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's very important for us to listen and not to dictate models to people.

We have to listen to the people who are in the system, the people who are delivering health care and the people who know best how they want to live their lives and how they want to manage things and how they want to deliver health care in this province.

With said, Speaker, I just want to thank the Member for CBS, in particular, for his comments. This bill talks about doing things in the public interest and, believe it or not, despite the House the last couple of days, comments like he said today, I think we are all here for what's in the public interest for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I think it's okay to get heated in here, and it happens, and we all get heated, but it's okay to take a breath and say let's get it right; let's ask the questions; let's answer the questions.

To be honest with you, I went back and read *Hansard* and during my back and forth with the Member yesterday, I think he was frustrated I wasn't answering the questions. Do you know what? I didn't hear him. I went back and read them this morning, and I wasn't actually hearing the questions he was asking. So that's one of the reasons I wasn't answering him. It was loud in here yesterday, Speaker, if you remember.

Having said all that, I appreciate the comments, I look forward to Committee. The last thing I'll say before Committee, Speaker, Happy Birthday to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: And Happy Birthday to the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 87 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 Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners. (Bill 87)

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 Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 87)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 87.

SPEAKER: Seconder?

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 87.

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 (Trimper): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 87, An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners.

A bill, "An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners." (Bill 87)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I'll just ask a question to the minister.

Can you tell us what was found in the cross-jurisdictional scan when he looked at British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia when doing this merger?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Health and Community Services.

J. HOGAN: There is a move, I think, across the country to fewer regulators for health professionals. So they would've made the move to fewer regulators, like we are doing here right now. And we would've certainly looked at their provisions in terms of composition of boards and things like that to make sure that our governance structure is in line with best practices for governance across the country.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Can you tell us with the consultation with the groups what kind of consultations were done with the soon-to-be former regulators, but also the different unions that represent these individual professions?

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

J. HOGAN: Obviously, the regulators came to the department. Through consultation with them, they would have consulted in turn with the Registered Nurses' Union, CUPE and NAPE. They advised verbally with me, and by written correspondence to the former minister, that everyone is on board with this move.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Can you let me know if any elements of the bill will lead to more nurses practising in the public system and how we will measure the facilitation of this, like the efficiency of this move?

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

J. HOGAN: No, so this wouldn't necessarily – well, it wouldn't. The purpose is not to bring more nurses into the profession, except, obviously, registered psychiatric nurses will now be regulated, but it's the same regulatory scheme. It's not changing anything, other than just moving it from two to one.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Given that this will now be the province's largest regulator of a health profession, with the merger, will there be more resources being made available to this new regulatory body to help with the workload as it's going to be now, over 10,000 people into one body?

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

J. HOGAN: No government resources go into either of the regulators now and won't, obviously, once it's a single regulator.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: What rules would be in place to ensure that the proportion representation between all four different nursing groups will be represented on the board?

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

J. HOGAN: Just to be clear on the last question, though, it obviously costs money to run things. They're self-regulated and self-funded through fees as well.

In response to the second question, that composition will be set out in bylaws.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Can you explain the purpose of section 5(2)? I believe it has to do with separating the advocacy and government's functions of the college.

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

J. HOGAN: So that is to reflect best governance practices. Persons employed or holding positions with unions or advocacy groups that promote the interests of nurses are ineligible to be members of the board. This is a new provision, not only for this regulator, but for health profession statutes in our province.

Similar provisions do exist in legislation in other provinces. It was added in response to consultation with the colleges. As I said, it does reflect best practices to avoid any conflict between the roles of a licensing body and an advocacy association.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

What is the current practice regarding appropriate notice?

J. HOGAN: Can you just clarify notice, notice for what?

J. BROWN: Under clause section 25(2), it gives notice of a dismissal to the complainant but not the respondent. Why is that and what is the current practice regarding appropriate notice?

CHAIR: Order, please!

I need the (inaudible) a little attention.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. HOGAN: Go again.

J. BROWN: Go again. Okay.

So under section 25(2), which gives notice of a dismissal to the complainant but not the respondent. What is that and, I guess, what would be the current practice regarding an appropriate notice?

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

J. HOGAN: Sorry, I just want to be clear if you're asking – the notice is given to the respondent. The respondent is a party. Obviously, you're notified if there's an allegation made against you and if dismissed, in this case, the respondent is advised of the decision.

J. BROWN: (Inaudible) notice, I guess.

J. HOGAN: Yes, and the complainant would get notice as well. Both parties to the process, I guess, are advised of the result.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Section 31(10) deals with publishing decisions or orders in a database or repository. Which one would this refer to?

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

J. HOGAN: Sorry, I'm going to need you to say the clause again.

J. BROWN: Thirty-one.

J. HOGAN: Right now those decisions would be filed under what's called CanLII. If you're familiar with CanLII, it's an online database for court decisions and other adjudication tribunal decisions throughout the country.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: And last one.

Section 40(3)(a) deals explicitly with patient records. Subsection (8) specifies that all records dealing with the quality assurance program or review or order are confidential. Does this provide adequate guidance on how to protect personal information in these cases?

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

J. HOGAN: Sorry, I'm going to need you to say the section again.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Section 40(3).

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

J. HOGAN: Yeah, this wouldn't be a change from any of the previous regulators, if that is the question, information is disclosed as necessary just to do the review.

CHAIR: Any further speakers to this bill?

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 86 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 86 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 86 carried.

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 Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners. (Bill 87)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The title is carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 87 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move the Committee rise and report Bill 87 carried without amendment, and it is seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

CHAIR: It is moved and seconded that the Committee do rise and report Bill 87 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Thank you very much.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters referred to them and have directed me to report Bill 87, An Act Respecting Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, carried without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have

considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that Bill 87 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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 Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy, Bill 33, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 33 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 Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and

Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy. (Bill 33)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 33)

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 Government House Leader, that An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2, Bill 83, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 83 be 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 Medical Act, 2011 No. 2. (Bill 83)

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

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

ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 83)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that An Act to Amend the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, Bill 86, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is now moved and seconded that Bill 86 be 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 Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. (Bill 86)

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

On motion, a bill, "Act to Amend the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 86)

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 Transportation and Infrastructure, that An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008, Bill 92, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 92 be 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 Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008. (Bill 92)

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 Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 92)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 6.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I moved, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that An Act Respecting the Management of Law Enforcement Articles, Uniforms, Vehicle Markings and Vehicle Equipment, Bill 94, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 94 be 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 Respecting the Management of Law Enforcement Articles, Uniforms, Vehicle Markings and Vehicle Equipment. (Bill 94)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Management of Law Enforcement Articles, Uniforms, Vehicle Markings and Vehicle Equipment," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 94)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of DGSNL, that this House do now recess.

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

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin this afternoon, I'd like to welcome several people in the public

galleries. First of all, Janie Lane who is recognized this afternoon in a Member's statement. She is joined by Rona Spracklin, also Doreen Lane, Joseph Lane and Tammy Spracklin.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also here today for a Member's statement, I'd like to welcome the Rocky Isle Singers.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'd also like to recognize former MHA and leader of the NDP, Ms. Lorraine Michael.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Finally, welcome to the Ocean Ranger families who are here today for a private Member's resolution.

Welcome, everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday after Question Period, there was a bit of a heated debate, and I made some comments that were uncalled for. At that time, the Minister of Finance stood on a point of order and she asked me to withdraw my comments and, at that time, I did.

Upon some reflection last night, I think that just to withdraw the comments doesn't go far enough and I offer my sincere and unequivocal apologies to the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Speaker, I, too, stand on a point of order that was raised this morning and yesterday in debate.

There was some ambiguity about some of the comments that I made, and I made them in haste after the Leader of the Third Party said that the Department of Education was drowning children. I know that he has since apologized for that, withdrawn that comment, and I, too, wish to withdraw my comment and make it unequivocally clear that I was not referencing children, staff or teachers in our school system when I made that comment in haste yesterday.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Torngat Mountains, Bonavista, Cape St. Francis, Ferryland and Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Nain's Ian Dicker and Makkovik's Jacob Dyson are two Nunatsiavut students making history, competing their way through the 2025 Canada Games volleyball selection process on pure raw talent.

Ian was 14 when he attended his first high school sports meet. His team winning the volleyball three years in a row, making TeamNL twice, and too many accomplishments to list off, Ian's most recent was captaining his Jens Haven Huskies to volleyball gold at regionals. The first time a North Coast team will compete in

the 4A provincials since 1998 – wow – playing the biggest schools in the province, his mother says. Nain is a very small school; 4A is an accomplishment. Also, this weekend he will receive the national Tom Longboat award – raw talent, Speaker.

Jacob was 13 when he made Makkovik's Wolverines and was off to his first high school sports meet. Too many accomplishments to list off, he, too, made TeamNL. This summer at the Canada Volleyball Cup tournament in Calgary, he was named Team NL's MVP – raw talent.

Armed with a Ski-Doo and a chainsaw, 16-year-old Jacob not only cuts firewood for his family, but he cuts to fundraise to pay for travel costs and registration for attending TeamNL's tryouts.

These are kind, decent young men. Win or lose, they make us proud every day.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, Mark Gray, an educator in Bonavista, moonlights as a photographer who captures many beautiful, renowned images of the Bonavista area.

In early November of this year, Mark was informed that one of his photos will be included in the upcoming issue of *Canadian Geographic*. He has captured numerous images from Cape Bonavista Lighthouse during sunset and sunrise, icebergs off our shores, photogenic puffins from a distance, fishing vessels, foxes on the Cape, et cetera.

In October of this year, I attended a wedding in Seal Cove where a resident of St. John's stated that during a visit to Bonavista, he happened to see Mark down at the Cape, lowered his window and

shouted out: Hi Mark! Keep up the great work.

His growing followers, like the aforementioned gentleman, will agree that Mark's eye for the elements that frame a picture exquisitely are all checked before he snaps. He has even become one of the attractions of the scenic District of Bonavista as his outstanding collection of photographs promotes the area locally, nationally and internationally.

I ask Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Mark Gray of Bonavista for his artistic promotion of our district and province through his photography.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, the Rocky Isle Singers are a community engaged ensemble that quickly became a cornerstone of musical life in my district.

This vibrant group is dedicated to preserving our cultural heritage with songs from our rich traditions of Irish and Newfoundland culture, songs from Labrador, to embracing musical diversity with selections from the classics and pop culture.

This group of approximately 60 members, led by directors Michael Davis and Jenn Hanley, take great pride in showcasing their talents and entertaining audiences.

The Rocky Isle Singers are committed to community, performing for seniors, town events, supporting local churches and fundraising for the Northeast Avalon Food Bank.

Through their fundraising efforts, this group will be travelling to Ireland in June of 2025, to attend the Limerick Sings International

Choral Festival, a non-competitive festival that welcomes choirs from around the world. The Rocky Isle Singers will be the first group from our province to participate in this festival.

Speaker, I ask my colleagues of this 50th General Assembly to join me in congratulating the Rocky Isle Singers on their accomplishments to date and wish them every success in their upcoming performances and thank them for being wonderful ambassadors for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 to recognize the Southern Shore Folk Arts Council, a not-for-profit organization preserving the arts and cultural heritage of the Irish Loop region located in the historic Town of Ferryland.

Since 1995, the Folk Arts Council has worked tirelessly to celebrate our traditions. One of the first efforts was reviving the Southern Shore Folk Festival, known as the Shamrock Festival, which showcases Newfoundland and Irish music through local talent as one of the top traditional festivals on the Island.

In 1998, the council acquired the historic Bernard Kavanagh Premises to establish a hub for performing and visual arts. By 1999, the space was transformed into the Southern Shore's first dinner theatre, which continues each summer. The Regional Arts Centre was fully restored in 2011, hosting art, theatre and community events, and now includes the Tetley Tea Room, a great place to have a mug-up.

Each summer, the organization employs over 15 local staff and students contributing back to our local economy.

I ask my colleagues to join me in commending the Southern Shore Folks Arts Council, its staff and especially Keith Mooney and the volunteer board who serve with unwavering dedication.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I rise today to congratulate Janie Lane of Roaches Line whose story epitomizes the true entrepreneurial spirit.

At the young age of 17, Janie began working at a local Sobeys supermarket to earn money before pursuing post-secondary education. Right from the start, senior management recognized her potential and recognized that Janie would only give her very best in every position she held.

She rolled up her sleeves and easily began learning and mastering each department in the supermarket franchise. From cashier to meat manager, to bakery and prepared food manager, she quickly excelled into a store manager's position.

At 49 she is now the franchise owner of Foodland in both Placentia and Bay Roberts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Janie and her incredible team have received several prestigious Atlantic awards, including Store of the Year 2024, Empire Retail Impact Award 2023 and Excellence in Community Leadership for 2023.

Her community leadership over the years has been outstanding, including supporting many good causes, like Polka Dot Trot, Run for the Cure and O'Shaughnessy House, just to name a few.

In her own words, the key to success for Janie is to just do your work as well as you can humanly do it and the rest will take care of itself.

Please join me in congratulating Janie Lane.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with provincial tourism leaders for the biannual Tourism Leadership Summit.

At that meeting we were able to provide an update on the 2024 tourism season.

We are very proud to share that this was a pivotal year for tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador and we have officially reached recovery in terms of surpassing the pre-pandemic visitation numbers.

In 2024, notably, air service has increased significantly, with a 21 per cent capacity boost compared to 2023. Inbound non-stop air capacity numbers have consistently surpassed 2019 levels for several months now.

Overall the tourism and hospitality industry is making significant strides towards achieving the goals outlined in Vision 2026. To date, enhancements in air access capacity, the launch of a comprehensive tourism research plan and a revised

marketing strategy, in collaboration with industry partners, has been implemented.

Additionally, sustainable tourism practices are being promoted, targeting training for hospitality staff is under way and local business partnerships are being strengthened to enhance visitor experience, all while engaging with stakeholders to refine strategies for future success.

As we go forward, we remain optimistic about the growth potential and together with our stakeholder will continue to showcase the unique beauty and culture of our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We, in the Official Opposition, are glad to read that the tourism industry has reached pre-pandemic visitation numbers after five long years. We commend those tourism operators who have stayed strong and determined and now can get to see their growth in their business once again.

Yes, improvements have been made towards air access but provincial air access is still an issue with skyrocketing prices making it unaffordable for travellers and residents alike to enjoy various regions of our province.

We, too, are optimistic about the future of tourism in our province. We congratulate all the tourism operators for their grit and determination each and every day to showcase our unique culture, heritage and pristine beauty as they continue to drive the economy within our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We are happy to hear that the tourism sector is rebounding and growing after the pandemic, however, we continue to call on government to do more to improve travel within our province.

We ask the government to please address the high cost of interprovincial travel flights so that residents, especially those in Labrador, are not burdened excessively when having to travel for business, medical care or visiting relatives on the Island.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to talk about two important events that brought Indigenous communities together as we honoured the Beothuk with statute unveilings in Botwood and St. John's.

On September 30, a bronze statute was unveiled in Botwood to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of a young Beothuk woman, Demasduit; her husband, Nonosabasut; and their newborn child.

It is a tragic story, but confronting uncomfortable truths from our past is necessary on the path to reconciliation.

In St. John's on October 11, another bronze statue was unveiled on the steps of Confederation Building based on a sketch produced by Brittany Wiseman of Conne River. Created by Morgan MacDonald, this statue is dedicated to the Beothuk and is a significant project to honour their history and culture.

In addition, a mural created by Grand Falls-Windsor artist Craig Goudie was unveiled in the East Block lobby. This beautiful canvas depicts a young Beothuk family and will be an important piece of our Indigenous artistic presentations.

Other pieces of artwork have been commissioned and we are working with Indigenous partners to plan for future unveilings. We thank them for collaborating with us to identify Indigenous artists and to deliver such powerful, meaningful commemorative displays.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The bronze statues in Botwood and St. John's, created in collaboration with Brittany Wiseman and Morgan MacDonald, along with the mural by Craig Goudie, are powerful reminders of our shared history and the importance of recognizing our Indigenous cultures.

Statues not only serve as memorials but can be catalysts for dialogue and understanding of the true history of our province. Can statues and paintings foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians? I ask all 40 Members in this House of Assembly today, can it?

These beautiful statues remind us of the Beothuk race, original inhabitants of this land and no longer exist. DNA research now searches for traces of this great people. We support these meaningful initiatives to honour our Indigenous people.

We also ask government for meaningful action to address ongoing disparities faced by the remaining Mi'kmaw, Innu and Inuit; to address the lack of action to correct past harms against our Indigenous peoples.

As we move forward with these important commemorations, we must advocate for equitable access to services and supports. Together, we can ensure the spirit of reconciliation extends beyond symbolic gestures and translates into real change for Indigenous communities across our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

The New Democratic caucus welcomes these gestures by government to confront the harsh truths from our collective past. That is why we encourage them to go farther by addressing the tangible harms caused to Indigenous communities.

As the spouse and father to Indigenous children, I ask that we all must, in this House, collectively do our part to walk the path of truth and reconciliation together, invest more in mental health and well-being of Indigenous communities, nations and the people of this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, calls from the legal community have increased for a public inquiry into the horrible alleged abuse by Tony Humby and Bruce Escott.

I ask the Premier: Will you do the right thing and call a public inquiry?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for a very strong question here today.

This matter is still undergoing an investigation. We cannot jeopardize the criminal process to let the prosecution move forward with this case. A public inquiry is an option that could be considered in the future after the legal matters are determined. We don't want to jeopardize that legal future for that.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I, too, do not want to jeopardize any legal proceedings. We do have it now that the Child and Youth Advocate is reviewing but the Child and Youth Advocate will not – and I repeat, not – examine police involvement in these cases, specifically, why Tony Humby was

repeatedly investigated over the years but never charged.

Speaker, don't these victims deserve an answer?

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has a mandate to protect and promote the rights of children. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is well positioned and has the legislative authority to carry out a review in this particular case.

The Advocate also has subpoena powers. So they can call people in to get their opinions, to get their views; whatever they need from them, they can get, Mr. Speaker.

A person who is in the position of the Advocate can complete the full investigation or a full review using these powers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we have already been told by the Premier's office that the Child and Youth Advocate review will not include a police review. That's already been said to us. Again, I have heard from current RNC officers and former RNC officers who have told me that this investigation needs to happen. That's what they told me; this needs to happen.

Again, Mr. Humby was investigated nine times between 2007 and 2021, but was never charged until last year. Again, the Child and Youth Advocate review will never get to the bottom of the fundamental justice in question.

How did this abuse happen in the care of the province for so long? How did it happen?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll reiterate what I said before, I'm not disagreeing with the hon. Member; what I am saying is that this is still an ongoing investigation. We cannot jeopardize an investigation or a criminal process that is being led by the prosecution as they move forward.

We're not saying no to a public inquiry on this side of the House. We're saying that investigation has to occur. The RNC and the RCMP and those that would be involved are going to continue those investigations. When that investigation is complete, we'll look at what the results are and then we'll go from there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, I ask the minister of the opportunity, why – it may be possible that these two things could happen simultaneously, but I think it's very important that we get the answers that these children deserve.

Speaker, I've heard from a family of a cancer patient who's been denied chemotherapy treatment because the policy says that they can't give the treatment until they figure out if the client can pay for it or not. This lady has gone eight weeks without access to a chemotherapy drug, which could potentially save her life, and it's being held up because they can't determine who's going to pay for it.

So I ask the Premier: Will you give this lady a chance and get the chemo treatment she deserves and worry about who pays for it later?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Absolutely, Speaker. The first I've heard of this specific case.

Obviously, as I said before, it's not a problem to raise issues in the House about individuals to raise awareness of them and, certainly, to bring it to my attention because it hasn't been brought my attention as of yet.

But, certainly, I would very much appreciate the details on this because anyone who needs life-saving cancer treatment in this province, which is funded by the government, should have it, and I will work on that immediately, as soon as I have that information available.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments.

The Premier's office actually promised this family an appointment. They were going to happen last Friday. She went to the hospital to get blood work taken, only to be told there was no appointment.

Again, I ask: Why are we failing this family?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question.

This is very important and I appreciate the Member raising this in this House. I've heard the minister say that he will investigate and certainly be on top of this. We want to make sure that health care is available to all the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, I will certainly provide the details to the minister right after this House, as soon as this Question Period is over, because it's too important to have somebody wait eight weeks and not get the chemotherapy they need so I will definitely do that.

Speaker, there's another patient that I spoke about back on November 7, I asked the Premier about Mrs. Smith in St. Anthony who had been denied rehab after a stroke. We sit here and there's still no justice, no rehab for Mrs. Smith.

I again ask: When can she expect to get the treatment she deserves?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As the Member opposite referenced a constituent of mine, I'm happy to answer this question. This is an issue that I've been working on for months with Mrs. Smith and, certainly, as the Premier has stated in this House before, there's no room for politicians to circumvent clinical decision-making in our health care system.

We've identified the areas where there has been some lack of communication or lack of appropriate use of the system and we're working on correcting those, but, at the same time, we do want to make it clear that clinical decisions that have to be made by the clinicians cannot be changed by politicians nor should they.

It's my professional opinion, as a registered nurse, that the decisions that are made by these physicians are always in the best interest of the patients and there's no room for interference by people like me in a political role.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, this has nothing to do political interference.

The only person to see this, the only doctor, a specialist was brought in to see this lady and this specialist recommended intensive rehab. That intensive rehab ordered by a specialist has not happened, because the system has not been able to find a way to get this lady the rehab she deserves. Most recently, Corner Brook was looking at taking her from St. Anthony to do rehab in Corner Book, that has not happened.

So again I ask: Why are we continuing to fail a senior and give this lady a chance?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I would just like to say that the services that are offered in the hospital in St. Anthony – there are physio and rehab services that are offered there. I would like to give a big shout-out to the folks who hold the fort there in the rehab department, they do an excellent job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: They can't always provide the specialized rehab that is necessary, but in cases like that every effort is made when an appropriate course of rehab is determined to get the patients to the areas that they need to be.

But as I said before, if there's a clinical decision that has been made, then there's no right of a politician to circumvent that decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I shouldn't have to be standing here in the House of Assembly today talking about this issue, it was raised back on November 7.

This lady's family is pleading for help. Their mom has shown extensive improvement, yet nobody has physically gone in to do a reassessment on her.

We all know our health care workers do a great job, there's nobody questioning that. What we're questioning is process. How do we get this lady seen? How do we get her to the proper rehab unit in Corner Brook? That's all the family's asking.

So once again I ask this question: Will somebody ensure this lady gets the care she needs?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As the Member opposite just referenced, maybe a reassessment is appropriate. So I will make it my mission solely to ensure that if a reassessment can be conducted on that woman, that it gets done in a timely fashion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: We will look forward to making sure because this is what this is all about. This is not about us, this is about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who need health care, who need our help, and sometimes we are the advocates on their behalf.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: And we will continue to be that advocate.

Speaker, Dr. Melissa O'Brien is a family doctor in Corner Brook who is closing her practice, citing overwork, burnout and a lack of support by government. Speaker, some of her patients will now be without a family doctor for the first time in 60 years.

I ask the minister: Where do you suggest they go?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

We are aware, and my understanding is individuals in the department have been in discussion with this physician. Of course, the goal here through the Health Accord NL is to deliver access to primary health care to everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Physicians and health care workers do come and go; I think you said she been practising for 60 years; she probably deserves a well-deserved retirement –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) years old.

J. HOGAN: Well, then that's probably why we shouldn't discuss individual circumstances, individual people in the House of Assembly.

Having said that, we continue to work on Family Care Teams; we continue to work with physicians who want to deliver health care in various models. As I spoke about this morning, we need to be flexible, whether it's fee for service, blended capitation, Family Care Teams, collaborative care teams, we're open and available to discuss any options with any physician in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, just for the clarification point of view, this gentleman had a family doctor for 60 years, and now for the first time he will no longer have one. That's the issue.

Speaker, Dr. O'Brien says existing family physicians are overwhelmed with paperwork and a lack of support, and this echoes the same comments last week from Dr. Stephen Major, president of the Medical Association.

Speaker, we can say all we want about what we've done, but why is it that family doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador in family practice feel abandoned by this government?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I've had a couple of conversations and meetings with the president of the NLMA in the last couple of weeks and listened to his concerns about family physicians in this province. Again, I reiterate what I said to him and what I've said to the House, that we need to be flexible in terms of listening to family physicians about how they feel they want to deliver health care, how they want to run their clinics, how they want work-life balance. Whether it's blended capitation, whether it's fee for service, whether it's working in collaborative care teams, I am, and I know the Premier is, open to any and all options to make sure that physicians are happy in the way they're working, which will mean they'll be able to deliver quality health care to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, while the minister spends tens of millions of dollars each month on travel nurses, we have 741 nursing vacancies, according to the latest information and nurses recruited from India cannot get jobs as registered nurses in the province.

Speaker, what's going on?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd be happy to give more information about internationally educated nurses.

International nurses who come in through the economic immigration streams, the AIP and the PNP programs, those nurses have to come with job offers. So all those nurses – I can't remember the number off the top of my head, but I'm sure I'll remember for the next question – they have to come with job offers.

We did have people coming in through the Priority Skills program and those people came in without job offers. There were no registered nurses that came in through the Priority Skills program. We do have some LPNs and PCAs who came in through that program.

Thankfully, it's an amazing opportunity, they've been able to upskill and I understand some of them are now able to work as registered nurses. But none of them came in with a job offer as a registered nurse.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm not sure how many people really could understand that. That was a pretty technical response to people who are not in on the immigration files.

I think people are asking a simple question, why 60 nurses from India are sitting home waiting to work and we're in desperate need with all these vacancies. I think that's the simple question I'm asking.

Speaker, we already know there's a bias in Central Health to hire travel agency nurses versus local graduates. Speaker, Yvette Coffey says there is vacancies in St. John's, forced overtime in St. John's and agency nurses still working in St. John's. Yet, we have all these internationally recruited nurses from places such as India sitting home.

Again, why did the Liberals recruit international nurses – which I will note the Premier personally led a mission in 2022 – if we have no intentions of hiring them?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd be happy to try and simplify it for the Member and for anyone watching. We've had 110 registered nurses come in through the economic immigration streams who came in with a job offer and are working. We have had PCNs and LPNs who came in through a previous program called Priority Skills. Those individuals were not offered RN jobs, but amazingly, were able to upskill through pathways offered by the College of Nursing. Now they are able to apply for nursing jobs, which is amazing.

So obviously, as a government, recruiting health care workers is a priority of ours. I just want to add some clarity that they didn't come with the registered nursing role.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I'll table a job ad I printed off this morning for a permanent, full-time registered nurse at St. Clare's. We have 741 vacancies.

Again, why do we have 60 trained and qualified nurses from India sitting at home while we have 741 vacancies?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the 110 nurses who have come in the India, Dubai pathway could only come here if there was a job offer and that they accepted the job offer. That's part of how immigration works. There are individuals here who have been here and have upgraded and upskilled to become registered nurses.

I do hope, and I know, that they want to work in the system as registered nurses. That's why they did the upskilling. I've asked NLHS and met with the president of the union last week. We talked about this very issue and I've written NLHS and said make every effort to make sure anyone who has the capability to be an RN and wants to be an RN is offered a job as an RN at NLHS.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I'll table another job for an RN at the Health Sciences Centre.

Again, we have agency nurses in that building right now and other RNs doing forced overtime of up to 24-hour shifts. Yet, the nurses from India, who the Premier personally went over there and recruited and then bragged in this House for a nice

while that they've done a great job in recruitment – can the minister explain what's going on?

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

J. HOGAN: Again, Speaker, let's not confuse things. The nurses who were recruited from India and Dubai were offered jobs as RNs, accepted jobs as RNs, came here and worked as RNs. If they didn't accept the job or if the offer wasn't there, they wouldn't be here. They would still be in India or Dubai.

However, there are vacancies in the system. I have spoken to the president of the union about the vacancies. I have spoken to NLHS about the vacancies. Everybody is working very hard to fill them. It is not as easy as just saying there are vacancies and there are registered nurses. You need to make sure that the opening that is there is appropriate for the individual who may want that job.

It does take some time; it takes some matching; it takes an application process. I've asked NLHS to make sure they're doing their utmost best to ensure that RNs who are in this province and are able to work in this province and are willing to work as RNs are offered positions that are suitable for them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, we have 741 vacancies. We have vacancies in St. John's. These people have come and upgraded.

Why are they sitting at home? I think that's the question we're asking. It is a very simple

question. Why are these 60 nurses from India not at work?

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

J. HOGAN: The nurses who have come here from India and Dubai were offered jobs as RNs. They could not come here unless they had a job offer. That job offer was for an RN. They came here as an RN. However, there are individuals here who have upskilled as RNs and do not have positions as RNs.

NLHS is working with those individuals and I ask them specifically to reach out and make extra efforts to make sure we can match those RNs with vacant positions in the system right now.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I think you reiterated my question because that is what we're trying to figure out. If we have vacancies, why are they sitting at home?. Obviously, they're qualified to work. Why aren't they working?

Speaker, I have been contacted by the licensed practical nurse class of 2025. At the recent recruitment session with the health authority, students were told any internal employees are not eligible for signing bonuses.

Speaker, why is the minister turning his back on another group of desperately needed health care professionals?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, we are working with every health care professional in this province in terms of recruitment and

retention. Things change, but as I said, we need to be flexible. We need to talk to everybody who has an opinion on how they want to deliver health care, how they want to work and how they want to live their lives in this province.

I'm open to having those discussions with anybody, whether it is an LP, an RN, a registered psychiatric nurse, a specialist, a family physician, a massage therapist, a physiotherapist or psychologist. Anyone and everyone. My door is always open to discuss how they feel that they are best suited to deliver health care to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: A good start would probably be offering those people the internal bonuses if you're going to treat them all fairly.

Speaker, these are internal health employees who returned to school to help with the critical shortage of nurses. They now feel like they are being slapped in the face.

Speaker, to quote the class vice-president: Why is the Newfoundland government doing everything in its power to drive prospective nurses away?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I will just repeat what I said: That is the exact opposite of what we are trying to do here in this province. We are working very hard. NLHS is working very hard. The Department of Health and Community Services is working very hard and staff throughout the province to recruit and retain health care professionals in every single field, whether it's physicians or nurses or any other allied health professionals.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Over one year ago, the province's deaf community held a rally outside this very building, calling on the government to improve access to services for deaf people, especially senior citizens.

I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development: Why haven't services improved?

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

P. PIKE: I think I may have missed part of your question, but I'll try to answer it.

We're doing a lot for seniors in this province. Seniors are our most valuable resource and we're doing whatever we can to help our seniors. The issues that you talk about with regard to our persons with hearing loss, we certainly are working towards that. We have made a lot of inroads and we're doing everything we can to help our seniors get through this.

There are a number of seniors that face health issues and we're doing what we can under the Seniors' Well-Being Plan. What we've done is that we've created more age-friendly, dementia-friendly services in our hospitals and that's certainly working for us.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the deaf community have been waiting. They've been waiting over one year for improvements and changes, which they have not seen. So what we need is action, not words.

Will the minister finally commit to helping more people obtain training and certification as ASL interpreters?

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

P. PIKE: Yes, we will commit to that, and we are doing that. We've reached out and these interpreters are very important not only to our seniors, but to our general population. We'll certainly be doing that.

We are looking at strengthening financial supports for persons with disabilities. As you know, we just increased the Newfoundland and Labrador Disability Benefit. We're now giving \$400 per month to match the \$200 that the federal government is giving.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: As well as we're looking at the Registered Disability Savings Program, which is a new program that we've just initiated and this will benefit persons with disabilities as we move forward because this is a program that will allow them to –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, what we are talking about here is the deaf community. The deaf community have proposed solutions, they've made recommendations but nothing meaningful in

the past year has happened and their situation is worsening.

This lack of support is heartbreaking. Seniors who are deaf may present to the ER without access to an interpreter. Seniors who are deaf are suffering loneliness in personal care homes without access to an interpreter.

Will the minister commit to immediately putting more supports in place like ASL interpreters to help seniors live full lives with dignity?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Yes, we already do have services in place, we will continue to offer those services and we will increase the services that we offer to the deaf community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, it's not just the most vulnerable who are struggling, it's the middle class, too. To receive the child benefit, a family must declare an income of less than \$17,397 for full benefits, with the size of the payment decreasing until it's phased out completely at \$28,500. That leaves out many families who are struggling.

I ask the Premier: What is his government doing for middle-class parents who are struggling but not able to avail of supports because of extremely low income, cut-off thresholds?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question, it's an important one.

Yes, we have been doing a review of those thresholds. The Member opposite is aware of that. It is something that I know we're seized with because there have been some changes. We've also done things for the middle class, for example, \$10-a-day child care. We've done things like ensure that the electricity bills haven't doubled. Those are the types of things we've done.

We've lowered, for example, the cost of gasoline. At the pumps, we've taken over eight cents per litre off the cost of gasoline. We've eliminated, for example, the tax on home insurance.

These are the types of things that we've been able to do as a government because we've been working very hard with a very strong economy to ensure that we're able to help people in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Some of these families can't afford child care or find it and they don't have a car either.

Speaker, according to Campaign 2000 report card on child and family poverty in Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest increase in child poverty for children under six years of age.

With the cost of basic needs rising, I ask the Premier: Will his government remove the provincial portion of the HST from a selection of children's goods so that middle-class families can have some relief?

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

P. PIKE: Children certainly are very important to us, and their care and the families. Our goal is to address the needs of

children. We've increased the child benefit by 300 per cent – 300 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: We've also established in our school system, from pre-k to Grade 9, to qualifying schools, we have a School Food Program that is so important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: That's so important. We've increased the child benefit.

So we've done lots of things to help our children and we will continue to do more.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Speaker, the emergency room in Corner Brook is in crisis. The overcrowding is due to the lack of family physicians and the lack of acute-care beds.

Citizens are waiting over 24 hours; people put in hallways with a lack of beds; one being moved from a closet to the hallway, as they have one patient more serious who needs privacy. Words will not fix this but the people need concrete action.

Minister: What immediate action will your government take to ensure residents are not denied life-saving care and access to acute-care beds?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Member is correct in what he says and there does need to be some work with regard to making sure there's the

appropriate capacity for ALC in that part of the province.

The concrete action that is being done by the health authority is to issue an RFP for a new ALC centre in that area. There has been a community care coordinator in place at the Western Memorial Regional Hospital, which is to help prevent people unnecessarily being admitted into the hospital to take up an acute-care bed that they don't necessarily need.

We've launched a DischargeHUB pilot project in November of this year, which will help optimize discharge from that hospital, which will, again, free up acute-care beds that aren't needed by people who might be in there. They have realigned the operations in the emergency room as well to create a second triage space to make sure that all options are looked at for people that are being admitted into that hospital.

The important thing is to make sure people who need acute-care beds have them.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: I just hope some of these actions work, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment of a new hospital was to include a radiation unit and PET scanner made by the Liberal government. The radiation unit is in place with no radiation oncologist. The PET scanner funds were given to the hospital foundations, \$2 million. This equipment needs to be purchased and in place to save the residents of Western Newfoundland a trip to St. John's to have this scan.

When will the government fulfill its promise and purchase and install the PET scanner

for the benefit of Western Newfoundlanders who need this scan?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I did hear about this commitment. It was before my time as minister, before my time as a Member, but I can say that the PET scanner provincial program is very important and Corner Brook is an important part of the entire provincial program.

I know he's been waiting for a long time, but I can tell the Member and the House and people in Corner Brook and the Western part of this province, that they will receive an update on this very soon, very, very soon.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, I am pleased to present the 5th report of the Public Accounts Committee for the 50th General Assembly, further outlining the Committee's activity throughout the second session since November 2023.

The Committee has been quite active, and I wish to thank the following Members for their diligence and hard work towards fulfillment of our mandate to ensure accountability on behalf of the Legislature and the people of Newfoundland and

Labrador: the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Member for Cape St. Francis, the Member for Labrador West, the Member for Lake Melville and the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge the Auditor General, Denise Hanrahan, and employees of that office for the exceptional support and guidance they provide us.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further presenting reports?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 20, 2024.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday in Question Period, the Member for Labrador West asked a question about an email that was sent around in Menihek High and I wasn't aware of it. I have since become aware of it and do recognize that it

was sent out erroneously on behalf of the administrator, because it does contradict our policy and the administrator has been made aware. Any funds that have been collected will be reimbursed and we've made every effort to educate our administrators on our policies to make sure they know what the appropriate use is.

I'm happy to table the policy here this evening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

The background of this petition is as follows: The residents of the Local Service District of Gander Bay South are concerned with the condition of River Loop Crescent. This gravel road is in constant need of upgrading, plowing and levelling to ensure the road is safe to travel for its residents. The road is used by school buses and it is the road to the great Gander River, famous for salmon. Many anglers from across the province and the world travel this road.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the paving of River Loop Crescent so residents, schoolchildren and visitors have safe passage and peace of mind while travelling that roadway.

Speaker, I got invited to take a look at that section of road. It's less than a kilometre. The road where it intercepts with the busy highway going to Gander, there's a lot of traffic using that highway, as you know,

from down around Musgrave Harbour, Carmanville, Twillingate, New World Island, Fogo Island and Change Islands. That's a very busy section. Where they intercept there, especially wintertime with the buildup of ice and snow, the school bus has to make a run up that grade and be ready to stop because, like I say, it's a heavy traffic load.

So what they're asking is – because the road is tipped going into the intercept – to level it up and pave that section of road because it's less than one kilometre of road. That's a safety issue with the residents and especially with schoolchildren.

I mean it's paramount that safety has to come first here. Therefore we urge that the Minister of Transportation reach out and take a look at this situation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the information that he's revealed in the House here today. I have spoken with the Member opposite numerous times about various things in his district and others.

As they all know across the aisle, my phone is on and my email is open. When they want to send me something, I am happy to look at it and deal with it appropriately. Safety is, obviously, a priority for Transportation and Infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak right now because somebody over there is talking, but I'm happy to finish.

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

L. PADDOCK: Mr. Speaker, Route 392 services the communities of St. Patricks, Coffee Cove, Little Bay and Beachside; approximately 28 kilometres in length. This road is littered with potholes, eroding shoulders and requires more than hot patch and the filling of a few potholes once a year.

Residents have written letters to the Premier, many ministers and former Members, outlining their concerns for accidents, vehicle damages, school bus safety, et cetera. This road is the only access in to these communities.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to significant upgrades to Route 392 that would include paving and shoulder reconstruction to improve the safety for these residents and the travelling public, including tourists.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been a significant effort of Marion in St. Patricks who went door to door in all four communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: I had the opportunity to engage Mrs. Clarke on several occasions as she related to me the impact of how this unkept road is having on a large number of people in that area.

Now, this unkept road is not the fault of the Springdale depot; they are doing their best. But you can only put so much lipstick on it. In fact, this past year, they even ran out of hot patch.

Why do we want to fix 392? First of all, it's the economic drivers that are in that area. We have fish harvesters, we also have aquaculture, mussel farms in St. Patricks, Little Bay. We also have a significant labour

force serving the community of Springdale. Now, with mining starting to percolate again in the Little Bay area with exploration, we're going to need that road fixed up as well for those opportunities.

During the by-election in May there was some discussion about doing some upgrades up along Davis Pond on Route 392. So I hope, then, that we can get an update on where we are on Route 392.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for, again, pointing out, as his colleague did just a moment ago, some of the issues that need to be addressed. I do want to remind this hon. House that we have about 9,700 kilometres of lane road through Newfoundland and Labrador.

Last year, this government committed about \$270 million for paving and for repairs of infrastructure all over Newfoundland and Labrador in the 40 districts represented in this entire province. I did spend some time in the district several months ago and there are areas there and areas in my own district that require more work. We're going to continue to address that.

The Member opposite, his own district, had \$13.5 million committed in roadwork to his district, so we will continue to do that. I'm happy to look at Route 392 or any other route that's there. We prioritize it based on a number of criteria within Transportation and Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the time.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Orders of the DayPrivate Members' Day

SPEAKER: This being 3 o'clock, I call upon the Member for Lake Melville to present his private Member's resolution.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is indeed an honour to present this PMR here today.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that:

WHEREAS the loss of the Ocean Ranger and its entire crew on the 15th February 1982, was a disaster of global implications that affected the soul of our province; and

WHEREAS the Royal Commission on the Ocean Ranger Marine Disaster concluded inadequate emergency training, a flawed rig design and poorly enforced safety regulations as crucial elements in the disaster; and

WHEREAS much of the physical evidence used in the Royal Commission, including a wide array of records and materials from the rig, were placed in secured storage at Ingenium in Ottawa by the federal Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS the loss of the Ocean Ranger and subsequent recommendations from the Royal Commission improved the design and safety features of future facilities, more stringent regulations regarding safety equipment and training; and

WHEREAS family and friends of the 84 men lost on the Ocean Ranger, have expressed the view that the physical evidence should be returned to the province; and

WHEREAS the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation has formed to use all of this material in a memorial for education and

means of encouraging continued vigilance regarding offshore safety;

THEREFORE the House of Assembly calls on government to work with the Government of Canada to repatriate artifacts and records from the Ocean Ranger to St. John's for a permanent exhibit.

Speaker, this is a day that for those of us who were alive at the time, it continues. I think it's one of those truly poignant, historic, life-changing days that will affect all of us and generations to come.

I was in university in Fredericton, actually, with several friends from here, from Newfoundland and Labrador, in a forestry class. While I wasn't here on the Island to feel that storm like so many were, and then, of course, the horrible implications of what had happened over that night and into the 15th of February and the terrible loss, you could certainly feel it.

I can remember in university with my colleagues as they came to understand – this was before the Internet – friends, family, that they had lost and what was happening. So it's really, truly an honour to be here today to lead this.

I'm going to go through a couple of notes and then I want to introduce some special guests. As I indicated in the PMR, we do know that a month after the rig capsized on the 15th of February 1982, the federal and provincial governments jointly appointed a Royal Commission on the Ocean Ranger Marine Disaster.

They had three questions that they were tackling. One was why did the Ocean Ranger sink; why none of the crew survived; and how similar disasters like this could be avoided. Over the next two years, the commission interviewed witnesses, recovered and examined rig components and conducted research studies. Many,

many recommendations – many, many of them of course have been implemented.

The commission found, as I indicated in the PMR, that the factors that contributed to the disaster were: severe weather, of course; flaws in the rig design; and the industry's inattention to worker safety and training. The offshore, that is so important to this province, is now a much safer place. However, it does remain a workplace where vigilance needs to be ongoing.

With that, I would like to go to introducing my group. I'm very proud to say that a new group, called the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation, is now focused on bringing home the artifacts of the 1982 disaster after 42 years of being held in storage in Ottawa.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: Speaker, and my colleagues, I'm very proud to introduce the following members of this group. If anyone knows anything around the offshore, around that disaster, we are blessed here today with a very pre-eminent group.

In no particular order, with us today is Noreen O'Neill. She lost her husband. He died on the Ocean Ranger. She's maintained a Facebook page dedicated to the memory of those 84 men that were lost.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: Also joining her is Sean Kelly. He's currently the CEO of SafetyNL and a past communications officer at the C-NLOPB, an important organization that was formed after this disaster.

Also joining me, a long-time colleague and person I've worked with extensively, Mike Cole, who was offshore the night that the Ocean Ranger was lost and he's spent most of his career in the offshore industry.

Rob Strong, also a strong advocate in the offshore. He's had an extended career

dealing with the offshore and monitoring developments. He is also joining us here.

Kris Drodge, he's a master mariner who serves as the head of the school of maritime studies at the Marine Institute.

My former boss that I worked with for about 25 years, Bevin LeDrew, that just doesn't know how to retire. He also, at the time, served as a director on the Royal Commission on the Ocean Ranger Marine Disaster and was responsible for the part-two mandate seeking ways to improve safety offshore.

Two members who aren't able to join us today, also colleagues I'm pleased to say of my own and of many people in this House, Ray Hawco, whose lengthy career included in public service included his role with the Petroleum Directorate during the period when this loss occurred; and Max Ruelokke, who was the head of the diving contractor that lost men on the rig. He was responsible for the recovery of material from the capsized rig and, most recently, served as the head of the C-NLOPB.

As you've already introduced, and it's really important, I'm really happy to see her here today, Lorraine Michael. As you said, Speaker, she chaired the Ocean Ranger Families Foundation that was incredibly important in supporting those 84 families at the time.

So thanks to my colleagues for recognizing them in that show of applause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: Colleagues, the debris that was recovered from one of the darkest days in the province's history was sent to the Canadian Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa to investigate the cause of the catastrophe.

Last year, the museum contacted the family members of the 84 lost in the disaster,

extending an invitation to them to view the collection of the Ocean Ranger artifacts. In addition, the museum sought the families' input as to what should be done with these preserved items of the wreckage, which include the rig's ballast, control panel, portholes, life jackets and oars, as well as, of course, many files from the commission.

The objective of this foundation is to achieve the repatriation of the Ocean Ranger marine disaster archived material and to develop some form of public display that can serve both as a memorial to those lost in and affected by the disaster, as well as an education source to heighten awareness of the need for constant vigilance in improving safety for those working in the challenging environment that is offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we are speaking about today is the need and the desire and the want, and I'm seeking the blessing of this House of Assembly, to encourage government to repatriate or dispossess the artifacts that are held in Ottawa. By the way, we also have some of these artifacts held at The Rooms.

There are several options to consider and it's going to be a complicated process. But I must say, I've already started working with this board, I'm not surprised by the depth of understanding, compassion and intellect to get this job done, and looking for the support of the House to proceed.

Some of the steps that we need to consider in this debate here this afternoon is that the transfer of these artifacts needs to occur on a museum-to-a-museum basis. We need to think about that, we need to understand all that's going to entail. We also need to understand and we need to do an inventory of those artifacts and some of them are quite fragile. We're going to need to think of things like temperature control and other aspects from a conservator's perspective to ensure that their integrity is maintained, because, of course, we'd like to have them

be available for future generations. But also we need to make sure that they're going to be safe and sound.

We also need to think about that The Rooms, which currently is at capacity, would require any decision to transfer those materials, if that's what we do, to another entity, we need to understand that's going to require the approval of the board. If we do move it from The Rooms to another entity, it's also going to require the approval of the minister.

As I said, there's going to need to be a specific inventory; a lot of details there and each of these options and considerations are going to need to be settled before we can actually do that.

I'm going to add some further details on the process as we wrap-up, but I certainly look forward to the debate and I welcome this prestigious group that's here with us today from the Legacy Foundation.

Thank you, Speaker, I look forward to the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member for bringing this PMR forward.

Speaker, the 15th of February 1982 shaped the future of Newfoundland and Labrador and certainly the offshore. I'd be remiss if I didn't say, as much as we grieve the 82 souls that were lost that day, we owe a debt of gratitude to the family and friends that remain and that fought for this to say and happen right now.

My sincere thanks to you and I think this is a great cause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: To Rob Strong, Noreen O'Neill, Kris Drodge, Mike Cole, Ray Hawco, Max Ruelokke and Bevin Ledrew – and if I missed anyone, I apologize – this cause is essential and I believe that when we look at the Ocean Ranger and we look at the history of Newfoundland and we understand the catastrophes that have happened in this province and how it shaped who we are as a people, I think it's a no-brainer for us to try and repatriate the remains of the Ocean Ranger so people can see and understand what had happened, how it happened, why it happened and how it shaped our offshore and our oil and gas industry. There's nobody in the province who hasn't been touched by that.

So through tragedy, we've tried to find a way to move things forward. If we look at the successes of our offshore, I think an unfortunate fact is that if there was not a tragedy, there perhaps might have been many more between then and now. It's sad that this had to happen, but the reality of it is that everything that we do on our offshore has changed because of the Ocean Ranger.

Having had the opportunity to be a part of the board that constructed the Hebron rig and have been working nine years with search and rescue and understanding the magnitude of what happens when things go wrong offshore, I can't imagine what it must have been like to be on that rig that night. I can't imagine not being able to contact your family and not understanding, in their last moments, what they went through.

What I do understand is the fight that these individuals have taken up in order to bring not only a part of history, but a part of their families and a part of our legacy back to Newfoundland and Labrador. I strongly urge everyone in this House to support this cause. The reality of it, as the former speaker said, is that we need a long-term plan, and a long-term plan includes somewhere where we can display these

items and that we know that the legacy will live on forever. Once that can happen, I believe that both Ottawa and the Newfoundland government will be on the side. I don't think that you'll hear any objection from anyone with all of this.

When we look at the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier and we look at the repatriation of Beothuk remains, our history was shaped by moments like this and we need to embrace them. By embracing tragedy, it helps us ensure that it doesn't happen again. The Ocean Ranger legacy, I mean you look to the schools that celebrate – not celebrate, but they memorialize it every year.

If you've ever had an opportunity to go to the school and see what happens, it's amazing how strong and how committed they are to still bringing these memories forward and making sure that the souls that were lost that night are never forgotten. I think that's what's important and it's not just the families and the friends of the individuals that were lost that deserve that. I think the entire province needs an opportunity to understand what that sacrifice meant to us as a people.

As a people, like I said, our oil and gas industry has helped us in many ways. If you look at health care, if you look at schools, if you look at the things that have come as a result of it.

It is quite astonishing how big of an impact oil and gas has had on this province. But I'll say it again, I don't think our future – I don't think what we experience today and what we have in our offshore and what our successes have been would have been what they are now if this tragedy didn't happen, and that makes this even more important for us to understand. When you look at offshore safety, when you look at the capabilities of search and rescue, when you look at the Coast Guard, the upgrades that have been made from a communications standpoint, when you look at the work that

C-NLOPB has done, when you look at the work that is happening every day from a safety standpoint.

I mean, you go up to the Geo Centre and you see the display that is up there, it is remarkable. I have the privilege of attending a meeting with this group a couple of weeks ago and when you listen to the stories and the work they've already done and the visits they've made to Ottawa and the knowledge that they have and how far along they are, it is quite remarkable.

But what they need from us, as the former Speaker said, is they need somewhere for these remains to be repatriated to. All of these archived documents, any piece that's there, has to have a new home to go to. So it needs a building and it needs a caretaker and it needs a path forward. I don't see how anyone in this House can not agree with that. It is a part of our history that has shaped who we are today.

I can remember – I was only a young boy – we were up in Labrador and I believe that night was a massive storm up in Labrador. There was a news article I read and I think in Labrador West it went down to -112 degrees Celsius with the windchill: -112. They evacuated the people from the area, like the trailer court, and they evacuated the people from portions of Lab City. So just imagine what the souls that were on the Ocean Ranger went through. When you talk about storms, that was a massive storm that came right across Eastern Canada. That night, we can't imagine.

The reality of it is that we, as individuals, can't imagine what they went through. But we do owe them a debt of gratitude and we owe them this. I think anything less than this would be unacceptable. I'll also go as far as to say, and I said it that night at the meeting, I'm not even sure that this goes far enough. I think that this legacy is important and I believe that, as each day passes, the group of people who initiated it and wanted to do this and the family members that were

closely related, there is less and less. Through education and through hard work, they've managed to push this this far and they need our support now. I, for one, will have no issue whatsoever supporting this.

When we think about the future of our offshore and we think about everything that they've provided, it's the simplest PMR that's ever come to the House, I would say. It's really a no-brainer.

The people who were on the Ocean Ranger were pioneers; they really were. Newfoundland is full of pioneers, whether it was fishermen who were out in dories or the first people who went offshore for exploration or the people who went offshore drilling, there have been a lot of different types of tragedy; but this is a tragedy in our history that was marked because of the size of it and it was unexpected. It was totally unexpected. We didn't anticipate something like this could happen.

When you look back at the safety that was back then, I think the younger generation today that works in the offshore, if they were to see how the offshore operated back in 1982, they'd be shocked. Actually, I think the people who work at Walmart would be shocked to see how the offshore worked back in 1982. It's really shaped our safety culture in so many ways that most people don't even realize how it's affected us.

There are lots of opportunity for government to utilize this, not just as a way to say thank you, not just as a way to remember, but as a way to push education. Education through the schools, education through employment and safety avenues. It's a way for us to ensure that tragedies like this don't happen ever again and to make sure when we spend X amount of money on search and rescue or we commit to certain things, that people understand why. That people understand that the Cougar crash, the Ocean Ranger, the *Ryan's Commander*, all these things that happened in our offshore, while they may not be avoidable, the

outcomes could be different if the right tools were in place. I think that public support would grow if we had a place to bring these repatriated remains back and explain to the public exactly what happened.

On that note, I don't have anything else to say, except a big thank you to all of you for forming this group and making sure that this happened. You'll have no trouble getting my support.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to thank my colleague for introducing this today, my colleague across the way for his comments and certainly there are going to be a lot of people able to speak on this subject today. I'll be brief because of that, because I know there are a lot of people who want to have their say on this.

Again, obviously, I have to recognize folks we have in the gallery here today. Sometimes I know we're not supposed to do that, but sometimes it's okay to break the rules as well. I do think we have to recognize the individuals that are here.

I just made some notes. The first thing, when I think about the Ocean Ranger is that I am of an age where it didn't impact me at the time. I was very young; actually, probably in grade kindergarten, so I didn't realize it. But you don't have to grow up very long in this province before you are old enough, or have a connection, or realize the impact of this tragedy on the province.

One thing I can say now, having had the benefit of being in the portfolio responsible for our offshore oil industry, is that this could have changed the course of an industry that has provided the underpinning for our

success in this province for decades now when you think about this. Again, just sitting back rereading, re-examining, going back, last night I went through some different clips and different stories. It's really still hard all these years later to fathom, to imagine.

Again, through the luxury of being in this role as a non-member of the offshore, I have had an opportunity to visit one of our rigs offshore. I travelled to Hibernia along with the Premier and, actually, with the former leader of the Official Opposition. Seeing the training just to go in to bring some rookie who had no offshore experience to go off there, just going through the flight, being out on the deck – that alone was transformative for someone like me. I feel like it gave me an opportunity to better understand the women and men that do this work. You can say it all you want, but seeing that certainly gave me a new view, and to know that none of that was possible without the sacrifice that we went through – none of that.

One thing I would like to say as a person, like many of us, we have suffered a lot in our province; we've had horrible tragedies like this. Sometimes you have to pick out the silver linings that come from this, that it's not all for naught, that there's something learned. I'd like to say that because of this we have a system that's one of the greatest in the world. It comes down to the action that was taken after that by everybody involved back at that time, through the inquiries, through the recommendations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: The C-NLOPB, the women and men that are doing that, the safety recommendations, and just the culture that permeates our offshore now, again, it's necessary. But coming back to a point that I think was made, we can never take these for granted. Sometimes with the passage of time, with maybe the sort of fading of memory, we can forget or not remember, or not hold as dear what's going on.

I think that's why it's important that we're talking about it in this House. That why the work that is being done by these individuals, by this foundation, is something that will be supported and I'm going to say here I think it's going to be supported by 40 Members of this House of Assembly. It's going to be supported by Government, by Opposition, by the Third Party, by independents. I can say on behalf of the department it will be supported. As someone who, again, gets to see this every day, a lot of this was news to me; I did not realize that this information was not accessible to us.

So what I would say is that sometimes – I'm learning this now – thank you goes to these individuals. What we all have to do now is we have to talk about it, we have to do the work, we have to support the cause. And then we can bring that back home and then we can continue to make sure that every generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – and not just those that go offshore here, those that go anywhere in any industry – recognize that we have to ensure safety. We have to ensure that women and men are coming home. We cannot allow this is in any industry.

Again, the lessons learned here have permeated not just the offshore oil industry, our fishing industry – anything. We are a province that is dependent on the ocean, the sea, and so we have to take these lessons. They must be looked at, learned, examined every single day because safety is not something that takes a day off. Tragedy is not something that just doesn't happen. It takes actual work on behalf of many.

So I just want to say thank you to the Member for giving me an opportunity to speak to this. I'm looking forward to the comments that are offered, the support that is offered. What I would say is, again, thank you to the family and to the friends, to the believers and supporters that keep this alive. It's important we continue to do that.

You have the support of the Legislature in doing so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity. As a former naval officer, I had the opportunity to serve on the Grand Banks in the month of February on several occasions. I would like the Speaker's gallery to know that on those two occasions on February 15 we rang our bell on board the ship in memory of the loss of the 84.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: You know, that was quite a telling moment for me as junior naval officer. My father was a fisherman. On February 14, 1982, I enjoyed a day off school because we were in a major snowstorm. The next day, on February 15 when we went in, I can remember the teacher coming into class and explaining the loss of the Ocean Ranger. That, as a teenager, did not have a huge impact on me at that time, until I went to sea myself.

When I went home that evening and looked in my father's eyes – he was a fisherman – as he was watching the evening news, there was a distant stare. That distant stare is there whenever we have a maritime loss right across this province. That distant stare was there when we lost the fishermen off Cape Spear, when we lost the fishermen off Fleur de Lys, when we lost the fishermen off Southern Labrador.

If you look at that first statement, our soul of our province is a maritime soul. It truly is. We are collectively a maritime nation. We must collectively do whatever we can as this group is doing, to remember, educate and improve offshore safety, not just with regard

to the ocean rigs, but collectively across our offshore.

I had then the chance, after I finished my military career, to even come full circle with the Ocean Ranger story when I worked with Virtual Marine. Virtual Marine came to life because of a focus on lifeboat safety and because of the loss of the Ocean Ranger. We, again, on February 15 would put down our pens and papers and collectively come together – and they still do – to remember the loss of the Ocean Ranger.

In section two and four of this resolution, it talks about the regulations. Just bringing these artifacts home, which we must do, can't just be about a symbolic approach to this. Every day that we are focused on training, every day that we are focused on awareness is a testament to those who we lost offshore.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: We must continue to do that. We must continue to be better, because that's what we require to honour their memory.

We must be ruthless in ensuring that we increase the standard wherever we can. I've read a lot on the Ocean Ranger, not just the actions of that night and the few weeks after, about how things have continued to have evolved across our ocean industry since. That's a common refrain from a lot of folks at the maritime safety organizations is the need to get better.

In statement five here in the PMR, it talks about the impact on families. Eighty-four families whose lives have been changed forever. But that impact has not just been on those 84 families. You see, at sea, there were a lot of folks focused on that recovery. Now we call it, from a military context, PTSD. We owe it for everybody that was involved in that, that's involved in any maritime rescue operation to ensure not just that we get better, but that we continue to

educate and bring awareness and ensure that those involved in any type of those operations are looked after as well.

Ocean Ranger and our offshore is one of the pillars, is one of the anchors, if you will, of our maritime industry. I'm truly grateful to see this push to have it better recognized for the next generation. But there are other anchors that I believe we somewhat have lost our way on across our maritime industry. I remember going to school and reading *Death on the Ice*. That needs to be a continued pillar of our education system. We must continue to ensure all of our maritime disasters, that we learn from and that we educate the next generation.

When I look at what the US have done with the *Truxtun* and the *Pollux*, the US is coming here. They've even named a hospital in St. Lawrence to that degree. We have to learn from others on how better to commemorate and immortalize those that have gone to sea for all of us.

We've had significant loss across our fishing industry over the last few years. A lot of those communities have had to go out on their own and put memorials in place. I think of Shea Heights with the loss at Cape Spear. I think of Coachman's Cove and Fleur de Lys, with the loss just off Fleur de Lys. As a province, I believe when we have significant loss of that magnitude, then we collectively need to step in and help them as we collectively remember those that were lost.

You see, as a Maritime nation – and that's what we are; we are a Maritime nation – that we must take every opportunity to educate our next generation, bring awareness to it, and then showcase our story – showcase our story. If you look at in Halifax, the loss of the *Titanic*, they have memorials there – the deck chairs, life jackets – in the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. That gets a significant number of visitors each year.

As generations passed, and if we properly tell this story, the story of the Ocean Ranger and how the Ocean Ranger had a follow-on global impact on safety, then that could be a further means of drawing people into our province to tell our collective story of ocean safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

One loss in the workplace is one loss too many. I say that any time there's anything I talk about when it comes to workplace casualties. Unfortunately, in this case, this was a significant one that is in a part of our collective memory as a province.

This is why I do agree with the PMR and I think this is a very important PMR, to remember those 84 men, but also to remind ourselves and everyone around us, the importance of safety in the workplace and make sure that workplaces are safe for all those who go to work every single day.

As somebody who's worked in the mining industry, and my family continues to work in the mining industry – my grandfather worked in Labrador West for many years, since 1959 – that it's important to make sure you advocate for the safety of all those around you when it comes to that thing.

I believe that bringing this home, putting it in a public space so anybody can go and see it, walk through it and learn the story, and remind everyone that workplace safety is a very important part of the core of who we are, and make sure that we never forget the lessons that we learned in tragedies like this and similar to those that the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay listed off as well that when we go to work, when we go to sea, when we go into the mine, when we go

anywhere, collectively, we must make sure that our workplaces are safe, call out unsafe work, but also hold those accountable who fail to provide a safe workplace.

In our collective memory as a province, it is important that we acknowledge that we strive for better every single day. Having a public place to display those artifacts from that tragedy, to house the records that came from that inquiry, and to remember those 84 men is important.

I wholly agree with the Member for Lake Melville on his PMR, because we have to do that. We have to do it right and make sure that those artifacts are brought home and displayed, and make sure that the story is told every single day as anyone strolls through that space, that they know what happened, why it happened, and make sure and remind them that we have to strive to make sure that it never ever, ever happens again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. BROWN: Like I said, myself and my family have worked in the mining industry since the '50s and seeing other workplace incidents, it's a very similar tale. We have to remind every single person that workplace safety starts with the individual, that it's important for every individual to call out unsafe practices, to hold people who continue to have an unsafe workplace, to continue to hold them accountable as well.

I'll put my other hat on, as someone who was with the Labrador Heritage Society for a long time as well, the importance of preservation of artifacts and the preservation of records. The Member for Lake Melville talked about making sure these artifacts are transferred in an appropriate manner, stored in an appropriate manner and displayed in an appropriate manner.

I wholly agree that we do have The Rooms, which is a fantastic archive and basically is

a part of the collective memory of this province. I think that making sure that that facility, if it does take this task on, to make sure that its adequately resourced, adequately given the tools that it needs to do to take on that challenge. If it's not that, even another organization or another subset of that, to make sure that as a province and ask the provincial government to make sure that it does have those resources available to do it properly, to make sure that this is a space of remembrance, a space of education and a space of teaching when it comes to this tragedy and all tragedies that have come before.

I don't want to take up too much more time on this, but I just want to thank the Ocean Ranger group, families, the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation who continue to tell the story, who continue to hold the collective memory of this tragedy, to keep the memory of 84 people alive and to remind us all here collectively that when it comes to workplace safety, we continue to strive for better every single day and we should all collectively, in this Chamber of 40 Members, strive for better every day for workers.

With that, I do take my seat. I do wholly support this PMR and I wholly support the idea of memorializing and educating about what happened on the Ocean Ranger.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to add a few words to this debate here today. Many people have already said some of the things that I wanted to say. I just want to reinforce something that the Member who just spoke said about this disaster being part of our collective memory. Many of the Members here have spoke about where they were when they heard about this disaster

happening. That tells, I think, the impact that it had on us as individuals and the impact that it had on us as a province and as a society here in this province.

Myself, I was a teenager at Grenfell College, doing my first year there. I just went to a class and the professor told the class and then we cancelled the class and went home and thought about what was happening. It had a big impact on us as young people there at the university at the time. That's one of the reasons why we need to repatriate those artifacts, those items that were used in the inquiry.

I attended the meeting that was recently held at the Marine Institute to have a public discussion about this issue and there were several other Members of the House of Assembly who were there from both sides of the House. I'm so happy that the Member for Lake Melville has taken the initiative to bring this to the House today for us to have a fuller debate, to help raise awareness of this cause and to give us an opportunity to express our support for this cause and to impress upon everyone within government and everyone within the province the importance of repatriating these artifacts.

While at the meeting, I was impressed – some of you may have seen the *Land and Sea* or I'm not sure if it was *Land and Sea* or *Here & Now* that was done on this topic, and reporter Jane Adey was at the meeting. I was, sort of, interested in her comments that the people in Ottawa at the Department of Justice who are currently holding these items, how respectful they were and how sensitive they were to the importance of the job they were doing in maintaining these artifacts. I think that's something that we need to recognize here today as well, as we move forward.

I think there are many reasons why we need to bring those items back to this province. One is that it's a memorial. It's a recognition of the people who were involved in this tragedy and it's a constant reminder of the

importance of safety. I think those are reasons that we need to support this motion and to work towards establishing such a place to maintain those items.

So, again, I want to thank the Member for Lake Melville for bringing forward this motion and I want to encourage – I'm pretty confident that all Members of this House will support it and work towards making it a reality.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd be very remiss if I never got up to speak on this on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, because it really changed life in our district, especially. With having things like the Kiewit facility in Marystown and Bull Arm and our refinery, we're very much dependent on the oil and gas industry. When this happened, it was something that changed our history very negatively at the site of the disaster, but then the legacy that came from it was our safety record and stuff like that.

I don't normally mention too many names, but a gentleman that I've known for a long time, and through my dad, Mr. Max Ruelokke really made some serious evidentiary changes to our safety and quality assurance of our offshore industry.

Consequently, in knowing this gentleman and having met him several times throughout my lifetime, through my dad, his heart is in the right place. This guy is, I would say, a foremost expert when it comes to offshore safety. So I would like to say a shout-out to Mr. Ruelokke for all his hard work and for putting himself up to be part of this board, which is very important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Sean Kelly is on the board; I've known him a long time. We won't talk about how we know each other because it's university stuff, but Sean is a great guy as well.

He chaired the meeting that myself and my colleague from Terra Nova, my colleague the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and my colleague the parliamentary secretary to the Premier attended. It was unequivocal that night that I think the group knew then that they had support from both sides and there was not going to be anything political about this.

It's something that happened in our history that we all wish didn't happen, but making this legacy and having those artifacts here on the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador, I think that's paramount. I think that's the right place for them and it will give them the dignity and respect that they deserve because of everything that has come into that legacy and made a big difference to our whole history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I've heard some Members say on the other side that they weren't around or they were a little bit young to understand this. I was 12 and my dad was, at the time, a repair manager of the shipyard in Marystown and it was a pretty sad house for a few days.

Speaker, for those that don't understand really what happened, I'd like to read into the record an article from John Weston. This was actually done in 2012, but it tells of the disaster itself and I think it's important to have it on the record. It's not to be morbid or anything like that. It's the fact that it's such a major part of our history, I would like to see the generations that come after us in this Legislature understand that when they go into *Hansard*, this is here because it is a very big part of our history.

So I apologize if I go over a couple of minutes, but I hope that the other side will see, it's only basically one page, so just bear with me, please.

"The *Ocean Ranger* had previously drilled off the coasts of Alaska, New Jersey, and Ireland. In November 1980 it moved to the Grand Banks to drill the Hibernia field.

"On Sunday, 14 February 1982, the *Ocean Ranger* was drilling at Hibernia well J-34. It had 84 people on board, including 56 Newfoundlanders" – and Labradorians. "At 8:00 am the rig received a weather report stating that a strong winter storm, with winds of 90 knots and waves of up to 37 feet, was forecast to pass over its location later that day and during the night. The *Ranger* continued to drill until around 4:30 pm, when it 'hung off' (disconnecting its drill pipe and retracted it for safety) and prepared to ride out the storm.

"The storm was in full swing by 7:00 pm when two other rigs in the area, the SEDCO 706 and the Zapata Uglund, reported being hit by an unusually large wave, which did some slight damage to SEDCO 706. Shortly after, the two rigs and nearby support vessels began to overhear radio chatter from the *Ocean Ranger* that referred to broken glass and water, and to switches and valves that seemed to be operating by themselves. The *Ranger* confirmed to the other rigs just after 9:00 pm that a portlight, or window, had been broken in the ballast control room, but it had been cleaned up and didn't appear to be anything serious. A radio operator on shore received the regular weather report from the *Ocean Ranger's* weather observer at 11:30 pm, and there was no indication of problems.

"Around 1:00 am on Monday morning," – February 16 – "however, Mobil's senior manager on the *Ocean Ranger* contacted the shore and reported that the rig was listing. Shortly afterwards, the *Ranger* called the supply vessel *Seaforth Highlander*, which was on standby for the rig in the case

of emergencies, and asked it to move in closer. By 1:10 am the *Ocean Ranger* was sending out Mayday calls. The final message received from the *Ocean Ranger* was at 1:30 am, when the radio operator advised that the crew were heading to lifeboat stations.

"This was clearly a major emergency. The two nearby rigs dispatched their standby vessels, but because of the storm's violence, it was very difficult for them to make headway. Searching for survivors proved to be even harder. The *Seaforth Highlander* spotted flares from a lifeboat at 2:21 am and headed towards it. The lifeboat was damaged but there were men aboard. The *Seaforth Highlander* was able to get a line attached to the lifeboat, and the first mate came within feet of grabbing one of the men. But the heavy seas snapped the line and capsized the lifeboat, and ultimately the *Seaforth Highlander* was unable to rescue a single person.

"The *Ocean Ranger* was still afloat at 2:45 am when the supply ship *Boltentor* came within visual range. She was listing heavily and waves were breaking over the deck. There was no sign of any people aboard and the lifeboats were gone. Shortly afterwards, the ships in the area lost radar contact with the *Ocean Ranger* as it finally capsized and sank.

"Although the search and the rescue efforts continued throughout the night and the following days, there were no survivors. Two empty lifeboats and several life rafts were found, along with debris such as life jackets and broken bits of foam. The lifeboat that the *Seaforth Highlander* had tried to rescue was later spotted by the supply ship *Nordertor*. The *Nordertor's* crew could see bodies inside, but they too were unable to recover it. The lifeboat floated away and was never found again.

"In the following days, ships in the area picked up 22 bodies. All of those recovered had died of drowning and hypothermia."

I just want to say thank you for letting me read that into the record because it was something that, as I said before, changed our history.

For the families, devastation, but for the industry, we've learned from it.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Speaker.

Certainly, thank you for this opportunity. I think the previous speaker, I think, is showing us and making us feel many emotions about this PMR today. While, from a structural process, I wasn't scheduled to speak, but in listening to the speeches, I feel that I have some words to say and contribute to this PMR.

I, too, would like to thank the Member for Lake Melville, my colleague, for bringing this to the floor because it's beyond important.

I know some have spoken with regards to the return of the artifacts to the province, but I want to speak, I guess, similar to what others have said.

First, I'd like to say to those in the gallery, Sean Kelly, we go back a long ways. I worked with him in Environment and Labour and this topic, from your perspective, you worked in Environment and Labour and where you are right now, certainly gave you that foundation to appreciate all of this.

Lorraine Michael, I wasn't in the House of Assembly when she was here, but, as a staffer, I certainly saw her important role in this province, in this Legislature on this topic and, certainly, others.

It has been said February 15, 1982, was a disaster, and we know that's an

understatement, especially to those who lost loved ones and those that are still here missing them.

The Member for Terra Nova talked about the stormy evening in Labrador and it kind of captured me to say a few words. He mentioned -112 degrees. I was 10 years old and I remember watching TV and hearing the news and the feeling that I felt was cold and dark.

One of my family members wasn't there, but we all know as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that they're all family members. When we lose someone in this province, they become family members and that's how important it was. But when you mentioned that temperature, it took me back then to reflect on how cold and dark that felt, so my heart goes out to all the families.

In terms of the PMR, to reference some of the words even in the first clause:

"WHEREAS the loss of the *Ocean Ranger* and its entire crew on 15 February 1982 was a disaster of global implications that affected the 'soul' of our Province." Think about that: the soul of our province, and it goes back to what I said in terms of the cold and dark feeling that I felt, but just imagine those that were wondering about their family members, their souls, and we remember them today.

It was beyond a disaster, Mr. Speaker. We realize that. But, moving forward – and I think it was referenced by the Member for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Baie Verte - Green Bay.

E. LOVELESS: There you go.

That reference where we've come because of that disaster. Unfortunately the disaster happened but **"WHEREAS** the loss of the *Ocean Ranger* and subsequent recommendations from the Royal Commission improved the design and safety features of future facilities, more

stringent regulations regarding safety equipment, and training.” This doesn’t bring back the loss, but I hope that the work that these people are doing, what we will do as a government support will bring some comfort to the family and certainly the family as a province as a whole.

“**WHEREAS** friends and family of the 84 men lost on the *Ocean Ranger* have expressed the view that the physical evidence should be returned to Province.” This needs to happen; it’s not an if. This needs to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: So the Legacy Foundation has been formed and we thank you for that.

And the ending of the PMR, on this side of the House, government support, I know we all are supporting the efforts in moving forward and working with the federal government to repatriate the artifacts and records from the *Ocean Ranger*. We owe it to the families; we owe it to their loved ones and those that were lost.

Again, I say thank you to the Member for Lake Melville for bringing this forward because it is of utmost importance. I say to the group in the gallery and those that are not here, thank you for your work. We appreciate it very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I’m just going to take a couple of minutes just to add to the discussion, I guess. Speaker, here in Newfoundland and Labrador I think it’s fair to say that we are people of the sea. I’ve been to a few of the services over the years, at the George Street church and they actually have a service called People of the Sea.

It really speaks to our legacy; it speaks to our history. The sea has provided tremendous bounty to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador through the generations. Of course, we know that started out primarily with our fishery, and our fishery continues to be a strong contributor to our economy today and it sustains many rural parts of our province in particular, but it also has an impact on our province as a whole.

Certainly in the ’80s and later, we’ve seen oil and gas. Since that time, the oil and gas industry has played a major role in the economic development of our province. It has provided tremendous employment for our people. It has provided tremendous royalties to our province, to be able to utilize for much-needed services, and it continues to play an important role today. While we don’t really know where it will be, I guess, in the future, we’re all hopeful or I think most of us are hopeful on Bay du Nord and so on, that that will come to fruition and will continue to be a major contributor to our province, for much-needed services.

But like the fishery, the oil and gas industry being no different, you’re dealing with the sea; the enormity of the sea, the power of the sea, the power of Mother Nature, if you will. We’ve had a lot of tragedy in our history as it relates to our people working at sea. Whether that be in the fishery, we think of the *Ryan’s Commander* and we think of even recent years in my colleague’s District of Humber - Bay of Islands we had a tragedy – it wasn’t far from the shore, but I believe it was lobster fishing and so on, there was a tragedy there. We know about the lucky seven. Thank God that they had an angel on their shoulder and they survived their ordeal.

We’ve also seen tragedy as it relates to our oil and gas industry. Cougar crash, of course, was a big one, a more recent one. But it all really started with the *Ocean Ranger*. As others have said, similarly to what I would say, is that I do recall when it

happened, but I was only a teenager at the time. I probably didn't have – well, not probably, I know I didn't have an appreciation for the loss that was felt by the families and by the province as a whole at that stage of my life, being a teenager.

Certainly, I gained a greater appreciation for it as I became older and more mature and so on and got to really understand what it was all about. I never had any neighbours, friends or family members that would've been involved directly in that tragedy. So that personal element wasn't there. But as I say, as time went on and you learned more about it and you got older, more mature, started thinking about these things, more than you would as a kid or a teenager, you really started to realize the gravity of that situation and what happened.

Prior to becoming a Member of the House of Assembly, I worked for many years as an occupational health and safety practitioner. That's what I did for a living. Not involved in the offshore directly, my last employer was the A. Harvey group of companies and of course we did service the offshore, part of the company did. But I know that as a health and safety practitioner, one of the things that we used to say all the time was that the health and safety regulations are written in blood. That was sort of a saying we always had. It's true when you think about it.

Because any time, generally speaking, when you see changes and updates and so on to health and safety legislation, more often than not, it's as a result of an accident. It's a result of something that went wrong and it was either a near miss or it was an actual accident and there was some form of loss, whether it be property loss, whether it be personal injury or whether it be loss of life.

But if you look at our *Occupational Health and Safety Act* here, provincially, and I know the offshore is governed by federal safety legislation, but it's the same thing, the

same parallel, if you look at our provincial *Occupational Health and Safety Act* regulations that we have here in this province, they would come forward to this Legislature from time to time for amendments and so on. Most of the things that are in that act, some of these prescriptive things that are there for construction sites and mining sites and everything else, many of those regulations came about and those changes came about because at some workplace, at some point in time, something went wrong that wasn't contemplated and all of a sudden, there was a need to change the act, change the regulations, perhaps make things a little more stringent, add further measures and so on. It's just basically how it works.

The offshore is no different. As has been said, back in the time of the Ocean Ranger – again, I was young and not involved in it at that point in time – it's certainly my understanding that the safety regulations that currently govern people working offshore were nowhere near what they are today – nowhere near where they are today.

If there's one thing that tragedy did, if there is a silver lining, I guess, that came out of it – it's hard to think of a silver lining when you think of the enormous tragedy – one of the things that did come out of it, I think, is that it certainly strengthened our safety legislation, not just in the offshore, but I think that even what happened with the offshore, it kind of flowed onshore. It became more of a culture, not just offshore, but onshore as well, and then more and more companies got involved and was an impetus to make all workplaces much safer than what they were.

So I certainly support this private Member's motion. I think it's important that we recognize the impact that this tragedy had on our province, the impact that it had on families, on friends, on neighbours, the important part of our history that it represents and anything that we can do to

preserve that history, to be able to pass it on to generations, I think we should do it.

Certainly having those archives, bringing them back here to Newfoundland and Labrador where they can be viewed by people, by future generations and so on, I think is important. I also think it's important to keep this tragedy, as tragic as it was, to find ways to make our future generations aware.

I've always been a strong proponent of having some sort of – and I know we've had it in different versions over time, it comes and it goes. When I went to school we had Newfoundland heritage, I think it was called, cultural heritage, we used to do. It was a course. I'm not sure what we do now or if we even do one or some sort of a version of Newfoundland history and culture and that type of thing, but I certainly believe we need to find a way to continue to preserve our culture, to pass it on to future generations.

I believe that the Ocean Ranger tragedy definitely should be part of that. It should be something that does get passed on, it does get preserved so that we can remember the loss and we can learn from the mistakes that happened back at that time and that we can preserve our history.

I appreciate this motion coming forward. I support it and thank you to the group above me, behind me, wherever they are, that are involved in making this happen. You're doing a great service to this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to have a few words and I want to thank the hon. Member as well for bringing this private Member's resolution to the

House of Assembly for us to be able to have this discussion on.

When we think back 42 years ago, for a lot of people that seems like a long time ago, but for some people, including some who are here in this House of Assembly today, it probably feels just like it happened yesterday. That's one of the most important things that we ought to be doing is to make sure we continue to honour them.

I want to reach out and publicly thank, here in the House of Assembly, all of those people who are involved every single year in the memorial service to honour the 84 men who lost their lives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Eighty-four men who lost their lives in this tragedy.

When I go down and look at the WHEREASes just as the minister opposite had done, there is one clause that sticks out to me, and that is the clause that says, "**WHEREAS** the *Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation* has formed to use ALL of this material as a memorial for education and means of encouraging continued vigilance regarding offshore safety."

That is what this is all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I want to thank all of the members of the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation. The hon. Member listed off everyone at the beginning and talked about the wonderful opportunity that we all have in this House today to be part of something that needs to happen, should happen, must happen, and we will all make it happen.

I am glad to stand up here and say on behalf of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and my caucus right here, we will support this 100 per cent without question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Whatever we can do to help facilitate this return of these artifacts, to fulfill that WHEREAS, we are prepared to stand and make it happen.

I will finish by saying something my father used to say to me all the time. He said: No one ever dies as long as someone remembers. We will continue to remember these 84 men.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing, and Mental Health and Addictions.

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Before I start, I just want to call out to one of the members of the Legacy Foundation, Lorraine Michael. Lorraine, I hope you're not too distressed to see that your former seat on the other side of the House is on this side of the House so that I can look at you and you can look at me.

I want to thank Lorraine for the work she's done on so many fronts, political, social, cultural for the District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, and she's certainly a good friend. Lorraine, thank you, and to the whole foundation, for coming out here today, most of whom I also know and also could tell a few stories.

The one thing I just wanted to speak about for those who were, sort of, in the professional class and working in government and in the industry back from 1979 forward, for those who may recall, when the oil was discovered at Hibernia, that was made known in 1979, obviously there was a lot of excitement here in the province and across the country and certainly in the oil sector.

Then we move ahead to the disaster of February 1982 and the morning that we all realized what had happened, you could hear a pin drop in St. John's that morning, that day. It was such a surreal event, but it was a real event, and we had to come to terms with it.

One of the things I'm going to implore of the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation is in your work and as you look at the artifacts and having them eventually transferred here to the province and in the appropriate facility that we also give consideration to the socio-political environment in which the Ocean Ranger disaster happened. We were at a very difficult time in our relationship between the provincial government of the day and the federal government of the day. That had a lot of consequences in terms of what happened, certainly post the disaster.

One of the early questions was, should there be a Royal Commission or a Commission of Inquiry? As a matter of fact, there were two proposals: the federal government proposed one; the province proposed one. It took the Roman Catholic Archbishop of St. John's, as I recall it – and some can correct me on that – to say publicly, governments, get your act together. And they did, literally immediately, and they approached Chief Justice Hickman to do the inquiry.

I recommend that inquiries report to everyone here in this House and everyone in the province that wants to know what happened that night and leading up to that night of the disaster. It is a superbly written, obviously researched, and documented report and we've learned a lot. As I was saying to my colleague, it really reads like a novel. It is so well crafted, it draws you in and even though you knew what the conclusion was, obviously the industry learned a lot and our regulators obviously came about as a result.

We've been fortunate, through that disaster, that governments have learned to work

together, in terms of our offshore sector. We have set up the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and that has been a success in making sure that the lessons learned from that disaster are not repeated.

Now, coincidentally, 27 years later, we had the Cougar 91 helicopter disaster. Again, we had to have another commission of inquiry to find out what happened there. And, again, safety was paramount.

Governments also need to figure out how they work together in their regulatory agencies to make sure a disaster like that does not happen again in terms of supporting and servicing our offshore.

Speaker, again I will come back to the foundation. I congratulate them for the work that they've done already, the attention they've garnered in the community and, obviously, in this House and elsewhere. Hopefully, it's the same interest in Ottawa, which I'm told there may be. Obviously we need to figure out, in short order, what this actually means, the mechanics of actually moving those materials in Ottawa to Newfoundland and Labrador. I know there will be conversations that have already started. I'll hopefully be part of those as well here at least on the government side.

But the political and socio-economic context then and now are important. For students of history and those who mentioned that here earlier that we learn from the past, then that has to be, in my view, part of this story that we cannot forget. It's a very compelling story. Again, it reflects the history of this place going back thousands of years. It's one chapter in our history, which continues to unfold. But it's a very critical one.

If we look at the nature of the impact – again, mentioned earlier – of the offshore sector in terms of our economy, our employment, our culture, it's significant and we can't lose that. But we have to remember where this started and how it

unfolded and how we can improve. Who can tell that story best, but folks that are living here in Newfoundland and Labrador and certainly the folks on the Legacy Foundation, many of whom were very active in the industry at the pivotal point in time.

I know Ray Hawco's name was mentioned. Ray is a friend of mine. And the work he had to do to deal with the families who lost their loved ones, he was pivotal to that part of the story, among others.

Speaker, I want to again thank my colleague, the Member for Lake Melville, for bringing this forward to the floor and I'm sure there will be lots of discussions. There will be debate on how this unfolds, what resources are going to be required, who is going to put them forward, what role the government of Newfoundland and Labrador will play in that. So that has to unfold, but that this is driven by the community for the larger community is something I love.

I want to thank the members that are here today and those who aren't to keep up the great work. You have our support and certainly the support of the House of Assembly.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand here today to speak on this PMR out of respect. It's out of respect for the loss of the 84 souls 42 years ago, but also, I stand here to say that I have benefited from that tragedy. I personally have benefited from that tragedy and many of the people that I have worked with in the last 20-plus years have benefited from the tragedy. So although it's a huge loss, and we all recall the loss, things have improved and I think we can take solace in that.

I remember that night and I remember my colleague from Terra Nova talking about the storm in Labrador. I remember how stormy it was and I remember how cold it was, and the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune talked about how dark and cold it was, and those were my memories.

Actually, I had a couple notes jotted down to keep myself on track because when things are emotional, a lot of times we go off track and we miss some things. In my notes, I talked about the storm and the darkness. I actually wondered was it as bad as I remember or was it just the emotional loss that added to how we perceived the environment. Because everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that was old enough to have memories remembers that day.

We all knew somebody who was somehow connected to a person that was lost the day that we lost Ocean Ranger. We all suffered and we still feel the effects. When my colleague for Placentia West - Bellevue read that out, I was, in my mind, saying I remember that.

And we remember they almost, almost getting to them, almost saving them and have them lost. I remember sitting – and the great big, old TV, which now is small, but with the big tube, and just looking at the weather and just looking at the sea and the wind and just waiting. That's what we did for several days. We were waiting to see if somebody was going to be saved, even though we knew – even though we knew. I was just young then, but we all knew somebody.

When I talk about how I benefited, it was about safety. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we all had to work. Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians used to have to go away. Then came this concept of the rotation, and we still work on the rotation. I spent my adult life working on rotation. I cannot sleep past 6 a.m., even if I went to bed at 2. That's the truth, because

when you're on rotation, you're on rotation and you're just thankful to have that type of job; you either embrace it or hate the lifestyle. But at the end of the day, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians still rely on that.

The Member for Lake Melville, who introduced the PMR, he talked about the failure to address the safety issues. He talked about what led to this tragedy. Eighty-four people lost their lives and that's how I benefited. I benefited because, really, the loss was so great, the province had to change the safety culture. That's what came out of this. That is the only saving grace, is that we live in a place now where the workplace is safer and there are obligations and responsibilities.

The Member for Lake Melville talked about ignoring the alarms, the warnings, as a failure. One of the things he said: inattention to worker training and safety. That was at the root, severe consequences.

Now, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we live by the sea. Unfortunately, we've had a lot of life lost at sea. I remember as a child going out around the cape and the weather would come up and you couldn't turn around. That's how bad it used to be. You had to keep going.

But do you want to know something? That wasn't a workplace. When you go to work, you're supposed to be safe, and that's the benefit; that's how I benefited. It's never the same, but now we have to have a safe workplace. So that's very, very important.

One of the members in the audience actually, the Member for Lake Melville talked about Bevin LeDrew is here today as part of this PMR. I worked with Bevin LeDrew over 20 years ago up in Voisey's. That's when I first started off. My job, working in industry, was always about environmental health and safety. On ERT, firefighting and then when we finished construction on mine rescue. That was one

of the things, we always had to make sure the workplace was safe and we always had to have contingency plans if something went wrong, we would minimize the loss of life and the injury to the workers. So the workplace has improved a lot.

Most importantly, I think one of the things we have to look at is how this tragedy has impacted us all, our shared memories. The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay talks about the blank stare. The blank stare on his father's face. That is telling for us because when one person loses their life, when one person is lost at sea, one person passes away through tragedy, it impacts us. Having 84 people lose their lives was really a provincial tragedy. One that changed us. We are not the same. I'm not the same person I was just going through that. We look at post traumatic stress, that's a big thing.

For me, when you deal with loss, I remember my father telling me about people lost at sea. I lost cousins, I lost relatives at sea and friends. But one of the things that stays in my mind is he talked about one of his friends, a fisherman, married with family, children and it was in the harbour, in Makkovik. Dad said he could remember seeing him and he was running down the gunnel of the boat with the starter in his hand.

Now, we all ran down the gunnel of the boat. From the time I could walk the boat, I would be going along and I would walk the gunnel. The rule was daddy had to be looking at us. I don't think I should be saying this in the House of Assembly, but, in actual fact, when he fell over, we could feel it in the room. My father talking about it. Everybody in the community rushed because there was a chance to save him and they got him off the bottom. They got the nurse there and they worked on him. The nurse worked past the time required to work on somebody. That was one person and everybody in the community wanted that person to survive.

Can you imagine now 84 people. You take all that hope and grief and loss and multiple it by 84. That's what the province felt. That's what we felt. That's why it's burned into our memory. That's why it's so important that we have to have things to remind us of that loss.

In actual fact, when you talk about the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation, to repatriate the artifacts, to have it for education and learning because as our leader talked about history. One of the things I always remember is that history that is forgotten will be repeated. We have an obligation to the legacy for our people in Newfoundland and Labrador to get those artifacts, continue on to educate and to make people aware so that history will never repeat itself.

We can't allow to have such a provincial loss now in this day when we can actually take measures, legislative, training behaviour and make sure that when we go to work, when we go on rotation, when we show up, that we will be able to come home safely.

I just want to thank the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation for doing this. I also wanted to thank the Member for Lake Melville for bringing forward such a powerful PMR for our people.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It's been a highly emotional afternoon and listening to the debate and discussion and the emotions that are in this room today, I wanted to add to the debate, to the discussion. I'm going to try to do so as poignantly as I can, because this is very emotional for me as well.

I remember very vividly the night of February 14, 1982. I was with my family; I remember the storm. I remember how difficult and windy it was. I come from a seafaring family, Speaker, and, of course, as so many other Members have spoken today, we understood the challenges and impacts that storms and weather can have.

Speaker, I think it's in our DNA. I think this sense of understanding the power of weather is in our heritage. It's in our people. So the night of February 14, 1982, while I didn't have friends and family that were directly impacted, I certainly felt as if I did. And every day since then, at the many, many remembrances, after the many, many years that it's been, I followed during the time of the Royal Commission, I've followed it since, and I've lived it as part of industry, of making sure that we had a safety culture. I think it's all of our responsibility.

Not a dozen years after the Ocean Ranger tragedy, unfortunately, my family was hit by tragedy at sea. I remember reflecting, at the time it happened, exactly the same feelings that happened in 1982, the hour by hour, the minute by minute, the course of the tragedy. It is incumbent among all of us in Newfoundland and Labrador to always remember the strength and the requirements that living and working and having a life on the sea takes.

So I think this PMR today is very important and I want to thank the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation for bringing home what belongs here; for bringing home the information that would be critically important for us going forward, not only to ensure that we continue to remember and reflect, but also to continue to build on that safety; to continue to understand the impact of the sea; to continue to believe that we have the strength, the endurance, the safety culture, the processes, the plans to ensure that those that make their living on the sea can do so as safely as possible.

As we are today remembering and reflecting and thinking, I want to speak to the search and rescue of Newfoundland and Labrador, to those in the Coast Guard, those in search and rescue, those that are involved in the safety of our offshore. Because there are people at sea today, we have high winds, foggy weather, we have to continue to make sure that people are safe. Part of that is bringing home the artifacts, part of that is understanding that they belong here and part of it is also making sure that we never let this happen again – never let this happen again.

I appreciate the efforts of the Legacy Foundation. I appreciate the efforts of the families, of the friends, of the communities and of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are keeping this fresh in our memories and making sure that every day – every single day – we reflect, remember and ensure the safety of offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I thank you for this opportunity to speak. Of course, I'm extremely supportive of this and I thank the House of Assembly for their reflections today and the debate and dialogue on this because I think it's incredibly important for our history.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's nice to see all of my colleagues in this hon. House standing one by one, lots of people being generous and only taking a portion of their time to allow others to speak, because this tragedy is something that has resonated far beyond the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The loss has been felt far beyond the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I, too, wanted to take just three or four minutes to acknowledge the great PMR by my colleague, the Member for Lake Melville. I want to thank him for bringing it forward and I want to thank those in the gallery, who are members of the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation.

I think of the words of Margaret Mead who said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I know so many small groups that have taken on causes and they're passionate about what they're doing and they've been successful. So I'm quite optimistic, Speaker, that the team in the gallery, working with other folks, will be successful in their quest to returning some of those important artifacts home.

I believe that it will serve multiple purposes, Speaker. As people go and see in real time, tangible, those artifacts, it will be a reminder that we have to do better. We have to continue to do our part to ensure that safety at sea, safety in any workplace, I'll say, Speaker, right now as also the minister responsible for injured workers through WorkplaceNL, it has to be paramount.

Speaker, I was thinking as I was listening to my colleagues here in the House of the old song – and you're around my age, Speaker, and I know today you have a birthday and you would know this. "The sea oh the sea the wonderful sea.... Everyone here should get down on one knee. Thank god we're surrounded by water."

We sing that and it's true, the sea has given so much. We've earned our bounty through decades from the sea. I represent a region in Southern Labrador where many people still are able to stay home and earn a tremendously good living from the sea, but the sea have also taken, Speaker. Again and again, we've seen families – there's a news story that comes on the evening news and everybody stops and, Speaker, then after a few days, people go back to their

work. But the families who experience loss, their lives are changed forever.

I represent an area as the minister responsible for Labrador, Speaker, where we have such a large land mass, such a small population. We have deficits in search and rescue. We've had many tragedies and the one that comes to mind, most recent, is the *Island Lady*, the two boys, Marc and Joey, whose bodies have never been found. I've worked with the families closely, continue to work with them. We've taken our plea to Ottawa on a number of occasions, asking for better search and rescue resources and also that more stringent regulations would be put in place for those that have to go to sea to earn their living.

I was thinking, just a few minutes ago, the mom of one of those boys, when we went in and sat before two or three federal ministers that day, she referred to the swipe card. Everybody that went in had to be scanned in and those who were not working there had to go through, similar to what we have over here, Speaker, the Visitor Information Centre. You have to be scanned in to ensure – and, today, if folks are meeting with us, they go through a scanner to ensure our safety. She said: Why don't we have that? And she used that example and she did a great job.

In the interest of time, I won't belabour that other than to say we all know where we were on the night in February 1982, that cold, stormy night. My home in Charlottetown on the Southeast Coast of Labrador. We now have a beautiful highway, no longer isolated. We were isolated then. I was barely a teenager and there was a birthday party happening. I was raised in a very large home, 12 in family. Like so many others said here, today, everything stopped at that birthday party for my dad's sister who was also a teenager and we gathered around the TV. The loss was felt far and wide.

Many people know my family as an aviation family, the Powell family, across Labrador. Before that, they all earned a living on the sea. The Member for Torngat just spoke and my mind went back to when a number of my family was fishing in a little place near Makkovik. I was maybe five or six years old, but I carry the memory of it with me always when there was a massive storm on. There was one phone in our community and that was at the house I was raised in. Then the phone went out.

Well, my grandmother called up to Uncle Bertie Winters and said, have you heard from the boys? The boat was called the *Blanche Marie* after my dad's two sisters. They shipwrecked. Four days later, Uncle Bertie and his son got out to Iron Bound Island and they and all survived – a good outcome. Much more positive than the Ocean Ranger but we all have our stories, Speaker, of loss from people who've earned a living from the sea.

As I was sitting here looking at some of the history of the Ocean Ranger and the people behind it, the families, the stories, I read a story about a man called Gerald Power, scheduled to come home on his turnaround. He had twin boys born the day of the loss, Tim and Matthew. He never knew that he was a dad. So we think about, often, and especially as February rolls around, those families that will carry that loss forever down through the generations.

We know that we've moved in a positive direction. We know that a number of the Royal Commission's recommendations have been implemented and that's all good, but we have to continue to strive to do it, in honour of those lives that were lost, and in memory of those lives that were lost, and in honour of those who still earn their living from the sea.

So I thank you, Speaker, and there's still time on the clock but I'll leave it for other speakers in the House. I'll just leave all of my colleagues with a little something that I

often say now if I'm speaking at a WorkplaceNL event: Tomorrow – our reward for working safely today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

You have about seven minutes, Sir.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, thank you to the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation and the Ocean Ranger Families Foundation for their work in keeping alive the memory of what happened in February 1982.

In the end, what else can we do in the face of an overwhelming tragedy such as what happened that night. Like any other tragedy, we can all remember where we were. We can fix the time. In 1982 I think it was my first year of teaching, the second half of it. I was teaching out on the Burin Peninsula. I know when I started teaching on the Southern Shore, I got to meet some of the family members of those – students, colleagues who had lost family members on the Ocean Ranger.

I remember listening to the news, and the sense of powerlessness, the grief, all the stages of grief, even though it didn't directly impact me, of the hope beyond hope that someone would come out of this alive, that they would find someone. And then to come to that awful truth that no one did. Eighty-four souls, 84 people, not only the people, but also the families of those people who I would say relive that grief and that day in a much different way than I do.

I was talking to my colleague here and, like I said, one comment was made about, well – I think the mover of the motion said for those who were alive at the time. I would say most of us were alive at that time, and

my colleague from Labrador West reminded me that no, his mother was only in Grade 12 at that time. I guess that's when it hits, two things: how old I am, and, (b), most importantly the importance of those who were there at that time to keep that memory alive. And not just for the sake of keeping the memory alive but also because it is about making sure that no one else has to live through that. And then making sure that we recognize and honour the grief that these families still go through.

I think it is about bearing witness; that's what it comes down to. For me at the time, one of the key messages is that any time when we're dealing with companies or organizations, it is incumbent upon us to make sure that they are looking after, that they are protecting, that they are caring for the people who work in the areas that are basically responsible for their success because it relies on workers. These workers are people and these people have families.

When a tragedy strikes, it is not just about the bottom line, but it is about people who work in the field. Regardless, they are there, they must be protected, the most valuable resource, however you want to refer to them. But for most of the people who died, they were a brother, they were a mom or a dad, they were an uncle, and I think when we remember them, it is important to remember who they were, the families who are still left, and to make sure that as we bring these artifacts back home, a reminder that we must always be vigilant. That in any endeavour, it must be about putting workers first, about putting people first, so that we never have to remember where we were on a particular date.

Speaker, there are six minutes left, I'm going to leave it there, except to say thank you for the opportunity to speak to this and to the foundations for the work that they do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

You have until 4:30.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I will be as quick as I can, but I certainly wanted to contribute to this extremely powerful PMR. I want to give my thanks to the people, Lorraine Michael in particular – my former colleague – you've done so much in the province and thank you for your work and your team.

Most people say they remember where they were; I was actually two years old in 1982 on February 15 when this happened. But my dad, at the time, worked offshore. He was a surveyor. He used to survey the ocean. I remember, even though so young, when it was time for Daddy to leave to go to the helicopter, it was a very sad time and we understood the severity of it.

My dad was actually on the team, the Polaris 5 boat for the navigating team that located the remains, the wreckage of the Ocean Ranger. It affects many people, unfortunately the lives that were lost, of course, on the rig and those who were involved in recovery and, of course, everybody who goes offshore.

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, it affects and impacts each and every one of us. I represent the fishing District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, where many of constituents go offshore, whether it be fishing or whether it be in industry.

I just wanted to give my thanks and to show my support for this PMR today and how, although at that tender young age of only two and years to follow, I'll never forget how I felt even at a young age knowing and somehow instinctively understanding the severity of offshore and what it means to each and every one of us.

Thank you, Speaker, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, I'll call upon the Member for Lake Melville to close debate.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's been a very powerful couple of hours on so many fronts. First of all, to have the Legacy Foundation folks here with us, I thank you all very much. I hope this has given you the comfort and understanding and support that you realize that this is very much a united House and we are with you. We're going to support you and we're going to get this done.

I'd like to summarize, if I may, in my few minutes left, just some of the key highlights. I was telling my colleague here that I started out writing copious notes and I've had to just go to highlights because so many wanted to speak, and certainly we all understand why. I just wanted to pluck out a few particular significant statements.

First of all, the Member for Terra Nova started us off. I liked his comment in terms of how we need to embrace these tragedies, as tragic as they are, as powerfully devastating as they are, for our future, our past and our present and the importance of realizing that.

The Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, I thought made two really good points. He said, regardless of your age, it doesn't take long to understand the gravity of what happened back in 1982. Then, in his capacity as the minister responsible, how he's gone through very much a transformative experience in realizing what goes on in our offshore and the people who work there.

The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay talked about the memorials and his role formerly as a sailor in the Canadian Navy and, recognizing that, I thought that was a particularly important point. You know, that's an age-old tradition that goes back centuries, the idea of loss at sea and the comradeship that one feels being in that very harsh environment when it wants to turn on you and you're not prepared.

Also, he captured it, and many others, and perhaps I'll mention it now. When I was compiling the text for this, I thought of a couple of key words and I'm very pleased that so many of my colleagues also struck on the same idea, the concept of the soul and how our soul was shaped on that day.

My colleague from Labrador West talked about his own involvement in the mining industry and how the implications for safety transcend not just what goes on in the offshore, but in all aspects of life and working in challenging environments and the need to always be safety conscious. I thought that was very important, and generations of his family have been involved.

The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation spoke about – and I was glad he was there, as were several Members of this House at the first public meeting that the Legacy Foundation had just a little while ago at the Marine Institute and how Jane Adey was there. This, I think, is perhaps a really important point I want to stress here is that the folks have been taking care of these very important artifacts that were evidence in a legal proceeding in Ottawa, they feel the enormity of what they are responsible for. This is very much a shared passion and a need to work with us. We don't expect any kind of obstacles, necessarily; we just need to get this right. We need to make sure the transfer is there.

But Jane Adey made a very important point that she said you have to understand that

the people in Ottawa realize they have very precious items that are very important to all of us here in this entire province. They're going to be working well with us, I'm sure of that.

From Placentia West - Bellevue, a very powerful reading of that article. Thank you very much, Sir. We were all there totally feeling that emotion. Good on you for putting that forward. It was very appropriate and I always believe, too, in getting it in *Hansard* is so important for future generations to see.

My colleague in front of me, the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, said that even at 10 he could feel the loss and that idea of the soul and how it affected him and that cold, dark feeling. I feel that's what we all felt on that day and that's what others have come to learn to feel about what happened on the 14th and 15th of February 1982.

From Mount Pearl - Southlands, he spoke about we are a people of the sea and certainly the importance of the oil and gas industry, how they've helped turn our fortunes around, and the importance of needing to continue to support them. So thank you.

The Member of the Official Opposition talked about the annual memorial service. I'm pleased that I've been able to attend that in the past, and others I'm sure have been there much more. It's a very powerful reminder to us all of what happened on that day and the need for continued vigilance in the offshore.

Very interesting comments from the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions regarding the involvement of the archbishop of St. John's. Sometimes when you read the transcripts and you go back, as I did to prepare for this, I can see there was sometimes it's referenced about friction and so on, but I think to put it as you did, Sir, and referencing the quotes from the

archbishop, you two governments need to get your act together.

This is too important to worry about jurisdictional responsibility and so on. We need one inquiry. We need it done well.

That was very much the outcome.

Sometimes it takes a third party to wake you up and I thought that was a really interesting contribution to this debate.

My colleague from Torngat Mountains who I've sat in this House with and we've also worked together and I really resonated with her because I've been on those same safety briefings with her and with Bevin LeDrew, as we both worked together in Voisey's Bay and other projects in Labrador and the importance of and realizing that, wow, yes, we've all benefited. For those of us who've been in different kinds of aspects of health and safety in the environment, we are constantly reminded to be vigilant, to stay vigilant and those lessons came from a hard lesson, 42 years ago.

The Minister of Finance talking about the implications of safety and the continued need to be vigilant. It's a theme we all expressed, but again from our own perspective in remembering what it was like on that night.

My colleague from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and Labrador Affairs spoke about other marine tragedies and, unfortunately, we're still having them. I think it was my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands who said, tragedies will still happen or at least the sea is going to continue to challenge us and other challenging environments but it's the outcome. If such an event does occur, can we make sure that our workers who are there in harm's way stand a much better chance of getting home to their loved ones?

The Leader of the Third Party talking about the grief of those 84 families and the importance of keeping that memory alive.

Future generations do need to ensure that our people never – I say, our people, the people of this province and beyond – never have to live through such a loss in the future.

My colleague and the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality talking about the role that her father played in that recovery effort and the impression that has made on her. Many powerful perspectives today, many powerful thoughts and I'm sure that they will guide this Legacy Foundation forward.

Speaker, I'm going to close on a point. The other word that I wanted to put into the PMR was the word global. Four years ago, I found myself in Istanbul and I'm in the school in Istanbul. It's partnered with Gonzaga, of all places. A school that has played a very important, prominent role in remembering what went on in 1982. The high school students there put together a film, and they've written a song about tragedies that Newfoundland and Labrador had faced, and smack in the middle of that is the amazing, soul-touching tragedy that occurred on February 15, 1982.

And there I am, on the other side of the world, in a very exotic environment, and I'm seeing and listening to children speaking in Turkish, talking about the importance of the Ocean Ranger on our soul, on our province, and frankly, on safety in the offshore all over the world.

With that, Speaker, I will take my seat. I thank my colleagues for their participation; I thank again the Legacy Foundation. I'm looking forward to a very positive response.

Thank you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

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.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider An Act to Amend the Lands Act No. 2, Bill 68.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Lands Act No. 2.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Lands Act, No. 2.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Lands Act, No. 2." (Bill 68)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

I'm very pleased to get the opportunity to speak today in the House of Assembly about Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Lands Act No.2.

Chair, we've heard from many people and many Members in this hon. House about this important piece of legislation. I just want to say a couple of things as to why, I think, this is a very important piece of legislation. It is important because we know that, in the past, this province has been riddled with problems with respect to our land title system.

To say that it's been riddled with problems is probably an understatement; it's a total mess, with all due respect. We've heard from the Members in the Opposition, in particular. This started back, I believe, it was in 2022 with a petition by the hon. Member for Bonavista, which basically called upon government to bring forth legislative changes, legislative amendments to fix this flawed process that we have in existence in our property regime, in our land title regime in this province.

Let me start off by saying: Why is this legislation so important in the first place? Because Crown lands is designed to be for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians. It is to provide social and economic benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it has not been benefiting the people of this province for a very, very long time, Madam Chair.

We know that it is government's responsibility, it is government's duty, as the custodian of Crown lands, to be responsible for ensuring that there's, for example, appropriate management, appropriate oversight, appropriate operational issues that are taking place in this system.

Why is that important, Madam Chair? It's important because people will not have confidence about this legislation. They certainly don't have confidence in the current legislation that exists.

So why is this important? Because this legislation has to be changed, but it's my respectful submission that the changes that have been put forward are minor changes. I'd like to give credit where it's due, and I think it needs to be acknowledged that the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture has taken the initiative to start to make changes. That should be recognized. However, there needs to be more, Madam Chair.

The changes that have been recommended are minor changes. They are, I would submit, band-aid solutions. I would also argue that they will not go to the root of the problem. That is my fear. Will this piece of legislation, will these amendments that are being proposed, bring the administration of Crown Lands in Newfoundland and Labrador into proper management or will it still remain in disrepute in our province? I would argue that what is being proposed will not address the fundamental foundational issues that exist in our land registry system.

We've heard from the Auditor General on this. She has spoken very clearly in her report that was just released in October of this year. She had talked about the concerns, talked about the many concerns

that she has with the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. She had concerns about its ability to manage Crown Lands administration. She came out and stated that essentially in her report. Her conclusions focused on that.

When we look at, for example, the first conclusion or the first item in her report, which was released, the *Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture Administration of Crown Lands, Independent Auditor's Report*, that was what she expected. What did they expect? What did this independent agency of our government system, what did she and the Auditor General's office expect? Well, they expected that the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture would have a land title system, or mandatory land registration system, or at least a transition plan to implement one of these systems.

She went further to say that they had expectation that actions would have been taken – actions would have been taken. She points back to the 2015 *Lands Act Review*. We heard from the minister in his closing remarks in second reading yesterday that basically he's dismissed the 2015 *Lands Act Review*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: But why is that? I would submit it's because it was proposed by a Progressive Conservative government. It had good recommendations, Chair, very good recommendations, which the independent Auditor General pointed to this government and to the department that she expected actions to be taken so that they would implement Crown lands related recommendations from the 2015 *Lands Act Review*. So she herself said that; those were her words in this report.

Really it was a damning, scathing report about the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture and about their abilities to manage our Crown Lands administration.

She talked about the serious systemic issues that are in this system that we have. She even said that the systemic issues encouraged misuse or allowed for extended illegal occupation of Crown lands. She talked about how this may have contributed even to public safety risks. She talked about the strain on the court system. She talked about how it's affecting the well-being of landowners.

Let me bring you to that point. We've heard the tragic, heart-wrenching stories from the Members for Bonavista, for Ferryland, for all of our Members, pretty much, have cited the sad, difficult, stressful experience of our constituents. I have one as well, sad to say.

I have a lady, a senior citizen in the District of Harbour Main, and what happened to her when she went to sell her home in the District of Harbour Main, only to learn when she went to sell it that she didn't have good title. What did she have to do in order to sell her property to the buyer? She had the buyer lined up and, basically, the issue was with the sale of her land. The lawyers told her she did not own the land that her home was on, that it was owned by the Crown. She called our office – and this was back in February of 2023 that she didn't own the land, and she was shocked with disbelief. Can this be true?

Of course, what did she do? Like many, she reached out to the Opposition Members to see what we could do to try to assist. Essentially, it turned out that when she found out that she did not own the land, she had to go to the bank, she had to get a short-term loan and how much did she have to pay? She had to pay \$36,000, Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thirty-six thousand dollars.

She had to go to the bank and get \$36,000 to pay to the Crown and that's not the worst of it. They even, she told me, insisted that

she had to pay a \$1,000 penalty because she had a building on that land.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: A thousand dollars additionally.

So we're looking at \$36,000. I mean, it took her 15 months of her life to get this straightened out. The worry and strain that she endured – and the other thing is, she had to sell the land because she had to go into a seniors' home because she had just found out she was diagnosed with Parkinson's and she was alone, she was widowed.

This was a heartbreaking story. I spoke to her two nights ago just to see how she was doing and she said: I still can't believe it. I had to pay all this money. I'm trying to come to terms with it. I'm still not over it. She said, I believe it even made her Parkinson's worse. In her own mind, she felt the stress and anxiety over the last year and a half caused her to feel this way.

She had to, in addition to paying \$36,000 plus that \$1,000 penalty that was implemented, pay the lawyer's fees as well. So this is a story like many stories we've heard. They are continuing stories. Will this legislation change those stories? That is what I fear is not going to happen.

When I look at some of the concerns, for example, that we've heard from lawyers, we've heard from the Canadian Bar Association who have written extensively about this in their reports, the Law Society as well, and we know that they have many concerns still.

Gregory French, one of the real estate lawyers that has taken the lead on this, who would be, I would say, classified as an expert in this field, has expressed concerns that what is happening, for example, the switch from 20 to 10 years, that timeline, is not going to solve the problem. It might buy

us a couple of extra years, but it doesn't fix much with the root cause of the problem.

His submission is to forget about the fixation on the 1977 period altogether, and instead, work backwards. But these are suggestions, these are proposals that hopefully this government consulted with the experts, consulted with the legal practitioners, the lawyers who are in the field, in the trenches every day and can see what the issues are. Hopefully, and we'll find this out further in Committee, how much and what extent that the government and the minister has consulted with the legal, the real estate and the property profession in our province.

But there are other issues that they've talked about with respect to specific amendments that have been made, and I will get an opportunity. I see my time is running out on this right now, but we will have lots of opportunities throughout the evening to discuss these. I will also have questions, but there's still more I'd like to focus on with respect to other specific issues with this legislation.

I do have to comment on one thing. Yesterday, in his concluding remarks, the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture opined that he would not be taking advice from the loyal Opposition.

AN HON. MEMBER: His Majesty's loyal Opposition.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, excuse me. His Majesty's loyal Opposition.

I point out to the Member, he forgets who His Majesty's loyal Opposition represent. We represent the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You're not going to take advice, are you? Well, that is the problem here, Chair. They don't listen. This is all about collaboration. You have to listen. You have to listen to these stories

that we've talked about; you have to listen to the people who are experiencing these problems. These are the human, the realities, the practical realities.

It's not funny. I see the minister over there laughing. Well, this is not a funny moment. This is not a funny moment. We're talking about the realities of people who have been suffering and have endured a lot of pain due to this legislation. It's incumbent upon the minister and the government – it is your responsibility. You are the custodian of Crown lands in our province and you have a responsibility to people to ensure that the legislation that we have is the best. It is excellent legislation. Not band-aid legislation, it is excellent legislation.

We are all here to hopefully collaborate with you so that you will see the importance of listening and taking advice from us here in the loyal Opposition.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've got to be honest with you, I would love to hear more from the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yesterday, the minister finished off talking about the plan from 2015, and the struggle I have with that is nobody mentioned once that the plan from 2015 was perfect. What I will say is that the previous minister made a comment in the last sitting that he said: I will make no apologies. I want to get this right.

Well, it's too bad he's not still there because this is not right.

If you have a look at what the AG said about what's going on, it's absolutely terrible. I'll remind the general public that the minister sat here – this is his second go around as minister – and he wants to take all of the credit for this bill, and he probably is the creditor for this bill because it's not done proper, I can tell you.

We listened to multiple ministers in this House talk about how Crown land was turned around in 90 days – 90 days. That never happens. All you've got to do is read the AG report. But now, listen to how he's going to fix it. He's going to fix a process that he's already guaranteed that takes place in 90 days, and he's going to guarantee it's going to be 30 days for referrals now – 30 days for referrals – or if it's not done in 30 days, there are an additional seven days added to it. So I'm glad he sits next to the Minister of Finance because maybe she can do the math for him. The process either goes through anywhere between four and eight referrals.

So if it goes through four referrals and it takes 30 days for each one, that's 120 days. Thirty days longer than it is right now, and he's already said it only takes 90 days. Now if it goes through four referrals and it takes 37 days for each one, it's going to take 148 days – 148 days. Do the math on that. It seems to me like that's 58 days longer than he's already said it takes.

Now, imagine it goes through eight referrals. Eight referrals, 240 days based on 30 days per referral. It goes through eight – 296 days. Now this is the same minister who stood in this House on multiple times, as did previous ministers, and said that this process happens in 90 days, and he's bringing forward legislation to speed it up and he's telling us it could take anywhere from 148 to 296 days. What happened to the previous statement that it only took 90 days? I'm really confused by this.

Then he says the five years is more than long enough. Well, I tell you what, Minister. Come out to my district – and I know you know because you're out in Western Newfoundland, but when you try to get on the Crown lands atlas and you live in Random Island, guess what? Not only do you not have Wi-Fi or access to the Internet, or cellphone service, you can't do it. It's just not there.

So all of these things that you're saying are going to fix the situation in rural Newfoundland where the situation actually exists, they probably don't have access to do it and you are overlooking that. We always overlook that about rural Newfoundland. Rural Newfoundlanders don't all have access to the Internet and I don't know why everyone thinks they do.

The whole process is going to be done online and I can tell you why. In my district, you shut down the Crown Lands office, but the doors are still there, the office is still there and it's still being rented by government, but nobody works there – nobody works there. You rent all of these places across the Island with no staff.

Crown Lands has got everything figured out under your regime, Minister. It's you that is doing this, yet you stood up here yesterday and talked about 2015. From 2015 to 2024, this government has had opportunity to make this right and this is what you brought to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Unbelievable.

Minister, I know you get the stories, and what really bothers me is that no one on that side has stood and spoken about it. As the Member spoke yesterday, he said he gets calls all the time. It's probably his second or third most popular call he gets is on Crown land. Guess what? It is no different in my district. I bet you it's the same per cent in Bellevue West, Harbour

Main, Bonavista, any rural district. So I would say the Minister for CSSD, the Minister for –

AN HON. MEMBER: DGSNL.

L. PARROTT: There you go, DGSNL, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, they all get the calls.

Now, if the Minister was getting the calls, if his office was getting the calls that all of these people are getting, then he must know there's a big problem. He must know there's a big problem, especially if he's been minister twice. He didn't fix it the first time and it's not going to be fixed this time, not with this bill.

Is it a step forward? Absolutely, absolutely a step forward. The reality of it is, it's a much-needed step forward. Keep in mind, it's not always about trying to fix things that are broken. Sometimes you've got to restart. If you think about that statement, you think about rural Newfoundland, you think about the previous minister of Justice, the current Minister of Justice, what's the big problem with 911? No rural route numbers. Where does that exist? Rural Newfoundland.

So here is an opportunity, Minister, why not go to rural Newfoundland and start from door to door, assigning rural route numbers, understanding what the situation is in those houses with regards to Crown land, setting up a registry, setting up rural route numbers so there's postal service for everyone and understanding how we can start from the bottom and fix it and fix a problem that has existed for a very, very long time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Section 39: Anybody in this House, whether on that side or this side, who doesn't have an issue with section 39 and the powers that it gives the minister, then you're not listening to what was said yesterday. You haven't read the legislation and you believe that the same minister who

thinks that this is a perfect piece of legislation, the same minister who never fixed it from 2017 to 2021, I believe, is going to fix it now. He's not and we're going to leave it up to him to determine whether or not it's a piece of Crown land.

Now, should the minister have some authority to make decisions? Absolutely, but not under section 39, the way that's written, absolutely not.

I've got to go back to these mobile portals that he's bringing in. It's kind of funny because never, since 2019, have we seen legislation where there was a press release, all this big function, everything went out and then there were all these press releases after, leading up to a piece of legislation being put out. If we did that, somebody would be accusing us of leaking it and this is no different. As a matter of fact, there was an argument that was made here in this House last spring. This legislation was put out and there were opportunities for people to move forward to it, I would love to have that conversation with someone.

Registry of Deeds, registry of titles and a land system title: Our province is one of two in the whole of Canada, all Canada, that doesn't have it. We're not doing it now and we think that we've got it right. The previous minister said it right when he said: I make no apologies, I want to get this right, and that's what we should be doing now.

Now, over the next few days, I would suggest there's going to be a whole lot of debate in this House and a whole lot of people standing on their feet to say what they've got going right and what they've got going wrong in their districts. There are going to be amendments, but it needs to be talked about. It needs to be listened to. It needs to be looked at in a way where we're helping the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the people who need this.

If you have lived in a house, you most likely bought it or it was given to you through a

will or some other way, why would you pay for the land that you're on, if you own it already? If you paid for it once and lawyers were involved and the lawyers said you bought it, this bill is still going to make you pay for it. You're going to pay for land that you already own.

Now, because the government doesn't have a system where they can prove who owns it or who doesn't own it, we're going to punish the people. I can tell you I've got people in my district and they can't afford it. They can't even come close to affording it. So what's going to happen then? Is the Crown going to buy the houses from those people? Are you going to evict them? I don't think, but what if someone comes in and they are on the edge of the sliding scale and they can't afford to do it. They're in a bad position then. Is government going to buy the houses back? Highly doubtful.

The AG report said one thing: Why does it matter? I'll tell you why it matters. It matters because rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been occupying that land since the beginning of time. We come from a province where families live in gardens and they know how to put their own ties on. They know how to put their tie on in the morning; they don't need someone to dress them.

This province has had families living in gardens together for generations and those gardens have been separated. They have been separated into blocks of land where people are under the understanding that they own that land and because we don't have a registry of titles here, now we're going to say we own the land, the Registry of Deeds.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not mandatory.

L. PARROTT: It should be mandatory, absolutely, a mandatory Registry of Deeds. Government has the responsibility to do that and it solves a lot of problems. Again, it solves all of our issues that we're going to

have with ambulance service. We just implemented a new 911 service and you can call ambulances in rural Newfoundland and people don't know where they're going because there is no addresses. The rectification in this bill here could help solve that also.

On that note, I'm sure I'll be up several more times before the night is over. I'll take my seat and let someone else get up and have a say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm delighted to take the perspectives in the opening salvos of the debate from the Opposition and recognize that there is clearly confusion within their ranks. I draw upon *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, where it was quoted: "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece."

The hon. Member for Harbour Main opens up the debate by informing the House that to do anything but to accept the 2015 blue-ribbon panel recommendations of the *Lands Act Review* in full, would be to do an injustice to the public good. The Member used the report of the Auditor General to restate that case. The Member for Harbour Main said that the guidepost, the road map, should be the 2015 blue-ribbon panel.

That was also made very clear, abundantly clear, last night during debate of second reading by the representative of the Progressive Conservative Party, the critic, official spokesperson on matters of Crown lands, where it was said in no uncertain terms that the 2015 blue-ribbon panel of the PC administration, that they have endorsed, should be the road map for all future actions on Crown lands.

Madam Chair, I will repeat, as I said last night, I understand the difficult, the tormenting position that the hon. Members are now in. While our government has announced a set of changes, positive changes to the lands administration and to legislation, those hon. Members must now stand by their road map – a map that leads people and Crown lands applicants to a dead end.

Our government has announced a complete streamlining of Crown lands applications, easier access to good title under squatters' rights or adverse possession and a pathway to gaining title to land on which homes have been built, but for which good title cannot be achieved in law. A quasi-judicial appeal process will be set up to support applicants who feel aggrieved by any decision that may be taken with an adverse possession claim. Plus, further ease of access is being granted through easier applications and around clarity for shoreline reservations and other positive directions.

With that said, we begin. If I were to follow the advice of His Majesty's loyal Opposition, what I would do in following that advice is I would squash squatters' rights, kill it. I would take Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to court to remove them from their property each and every time. The blue-ribbon panel endorsed by the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador says do not make any easier access changes to adverse possession, period. Maintain an exemption period for adverse possession of 1957 to '77, knowing full well that this means that access to adverse possession ends. Because, as we know, the original intent of the legislation, as done by Gerald Ottenheimer in 1976, in presenting this legislation, said squatters' rights, adverse possession must end.

The fundamental principle behind this was that adverse possession against the Crown would end when the pool or the availability

of affiants would no longer be available because they would age out.

To put this in clear context, what this Legislature decided back in 1976 was upheld and supported by not only that administration of Frank Moores, but the Brian Peckford administration, the Clyde Wells administration, the Brian Tobin administration. I could go on and on. But every administration until this administration has said adverse possession must stay as it is, and let it fulfill its formal and natural legacy of ending so that no one can get access to it and those who cannot get access to it, shall pay the price through the courts of having their land removed from them. That is really, in essence, what the Auditor General said as well, is that would be the plan, and took issue – and I accept that she took issue – with the fact that the Crown did not necessarily act on that.

So what we have done here, we have put in a place where, Madam Chair, respectfully, I will not accept the advice of the Progressive Conservatives and see that this is no longer available, this tool to get access to land is no longer available to anyone in our province. This is a very bold step because it acts – not only it does not accept the 2015 blue-ribbon panel endorsed by the Progressive Conservatives and their plan. Not only does it not endorse it, it actually takes a fundamental change where it says it must not accept that advice. It must go in a very, very diametrically opposed position.

If Members were to ask themselves why action was not taken in the past, it's maybe why actions were not taken from 2016 until today, because maybe we took too seriously the 2015 Crown *Lands Act* review and the PC blue-ribbon panel endorsed recommendation therein because this is what that panel recommended. This is what has been endorsed by His Majesty's loyal Opposition.

Do not change the 20-year period of exemption for consideration of squatters'

rights, of adverse possession. One must occupy land or your forebearers, your successors, your predecessors must occupy that land in open, notorious, exclusive and consecutive occupation for the entire period of 20 years from 1957 to '77. Do not change that period because it will allow more applicants to come forward. That is what the *Lands Act* review of 2015 said, the PC Party endorsed blue-ribbon panel.

It went further though, Madam Chair. It said that for those who do not meet this test, the blue-ribbon panel said, take aggressive, legal actions against them. Take them to court immediately and evict them from their property. But it went even further, Madam Chair. It said that for those who may still be able to squeak in through that portal, through that window of 1957 to '77, do not give them a grant and before they're even allowed to apply, they must go enact a survey. They must contract a survey of the property in advance. And they must seek the services of a lawyer first in order to file an application.

Automatically, right off the top, that's a \$10,000 bill, I would estimate before you even know if you're going to be successful. Under the current system, you do not need to have survey in place. You do not need to contract for a survey. You need to provide a thematic map which describes in general terms the area that you're looking at or you feel you have dispossessed the Crown from and you must provide for affidavits and you must fill out the application form. We're going to make that easier.

Because instead of demanding evidence for 20 consecutive years, that you or those before you occupied the land each and every day, day after day, openly, notoriously, consecutively and exclusively, we're saying let's cut that in half. That is contrary to the advice of the PC endorsed blue-ribbon panel.

It is contrary to what we are doing; we will not accept that advice. This plan is a bold plan, but it's an actually easier plan and for those who question why this action has been taken, it's because nobody would take action before, because unless you could solve everybody's problem, solve nobody's problem.

CHAIR: The minister's time has expired.

G. BYRNE: We are not taking that advice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Thanks, Chair.

Thanks for giving me the chance to speak on Crown lands. I've been an MHA now close to six months. I've been averaging a Crown lands file per week. I think that is a reflection across rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I've dug into this over the last six months, there are a number of concerns and a lot of these have been highlighted, and I've followed the debate both in the House and from *Open Line* over the last two to three years. I think what we have going on here right now is almost like two ships passing in the night. We're asking questions and then the government is coming back in a totally opposite direction. This is all about who we represent, all 40 of us, collectively, and getting this bill right for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: So I want to highlight my own family history, where we currently are with some of this and then throw in a case or two. So my own family history in the Green Bay South area goes back to before 1832, our very first Assembly here. So I guess a good question for the minister is, we're looking at giving certificates for,

potentially, Bonavista, maybe Trinity, St. John's, well what about Notre Dame Bay? Because when people came and settled in Notre Dame Bay, they came in through either Fogo or Twillingate. That's how those bays were settled in Notre Dame Bay. They didn't come in through St. John's; they came from Bristol into Twillingate and then were parcelled out.

My roots, like I said, are close, now, to 200 years. My great-great-grandfather had a British grant. Was that lost in the fire? I don't know. But I was able to track my great-grandfather's will from the Supreme Court, which indicates the grant and how it was divided up amongst his sons, so the piece that my grandfather had. I think it's important, if we're going to look at giving certificates to historical areas of the Island, that we truly understand our history in rural Newfoundland and how this province was settled.

Now, yesterday, I heard the minister say – and I want to highlight where we currently are – there are two phrases he highlighted. First, we want people to get good title to their land, this is what this is about; secondly, responsibility to do what is right – responsibility to do what is right. So what is stopping the government? We don't need to wait until this bill is approved. We can start day one, empower the public servants now to do what is right.

This is all about deeds. Minister, you can be known as Mr. Good Deeds.

G. BYRNE: Oh, I like this.

L. PADDOCK: You need to start now. We don't have to wait until tomorrow. We don't have to wait until this is approved.

G. BYRNE: I've just become motivated.

L. PADDOCK: Right, and that's what this is all about, is motivating you to do the right thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: You talk about quoting Macbeth. So here's one for you, Malvolio: Where art thou? Meaning where is government in this process with regards to Crown lands? Empower the public servants now to do the right thing. There's an opportunity to do that.

I always look at things, from my background in the military and also a background as an accountant, from a process side and how we can streamline and improve process.

This summer when I queried on my first lot of Crown lands, I spoke to my constituents via phone, took their details, did up an authorization to act and submitted it. Guess what, Minister, guess what came back? It came back: No, this is no good, you don't have their signature.

Is this insurance that we're trying to sort out? You initially said about wanting people to get good title to their land. I had to work then with Crown Lands, and my district is spread out, it's not easy like some of those, it's either driving to those people or those people driving to my office in Springdale to sign that authorization-to-act form. It should never, never, be this way.

This is an opportunity, an easy opportunity for you, as potentially to be known as Mr. Good Deeds, to streamline this process, right now, right now and send a missive to your department: We no longer need to have that signature on it. It can be done as the other departments are doing it, either by email or by phone. This, as I indicated, this is not insurance. This it trying to do the right thing for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Now, since I've still got a couple of minutes, I want to highlight a case in Triton. Chair, 51 years ago, this couple, she wanted to stay in Triton, so her father gave her his garden. His garden was outside his grant and they built a family home there, raised a family

and they've always been focused on doing the right thing. They've been paying property taxes in that area for 50-plus years. So when they came to me and I queried on their behalf – they came to me because, as was highlighted by the MHA for Terra Nova, we have a digital divide here in the province where some people need help in accessing government services, particularly seniors.

So I submitted a request for an update on their application; an application that had been submitted about three years prior. The response I got back: Cancelled. Information not received in time. So where was the dialogue between your department and my constituents with that? You know, we can't have it that it's like a black hole where you submit information and you get nothing in return.

Again, there's an opportunity now for some of these that have been cancelled, for your department to go back and uncancel them, to restore them to a process. We need to do what is right for every senior that's challenged with this land process in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now you can probably say, all right, they could, probably, quickly, qualify now for a quitclaim. Yet if we look at their case, their case really underlines that they should have full access to adverse possession. But the challenge there, if we go back again, is for them to get 75-year-old-plus people to be able to sign affidavits on their behalf.

The further challenge, again as was highlighted, is a lack of counter service for them to be able to process their application.

At that, Chair, I'll sit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

The minister had mentioned about the – I think he had referred to the blue-ribbon *Lands Act Review* of 2015. I know if I just look at the inside page of the *Lands Act Review* and they have the grateful support and guidance – and Minister, just turn to page 2 there – specifically a very special thank you to Mr. Denis Barry, QC, Law Society Representative; Ms. Dianne Smith, QC, Law Society Representative; Mr. Herb Edwards, Solicitor, Justice and Public Safety, which I think he is still in government currently, and from what I hear on this side, a very good man.

I don't know why the hon. minister would say because it's a PC. These are some good credentials of people who put some things forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I think you've given it the wrong title. It was a dedicated, intellectual group who put forth some recommendations, many of which you're bringing forward now, nine years and three months later. I think that's good. It's good. We questioned why you hadn't brought it earlier, but it's good that you're bringing it now.

Minister, our contention is that people are going to have to pay money for what we believe is land that we think they rightfully own. We think that people are going to have to pay money for land that they rightfully own. We don't know enough about your quitclaim, other than what is written here. It says the quitclaim under the Primary Residence Property Title Program will give these people who can't prove that they do have the squatters' rights, or have that for that 10-year period which you're proposing now, they can apply for a quitclaim if they have good title. I'm assuming good title would be if they got a couple of affidavits registered at the Registry of Deeds; maybe pay municipal taxes. If they showed they've got some good ownership, they can apply for a quitclaim.

Now if you look at the District of Bonavista, if you look at the Crown lands atlas and the District of Bonavista and look at where the population live, you've got the vast amount of land on the peninsula in Bonavista that would be Crown lands. So when my constituents ask are we going to have to pay any money, I'm thinking right now – and I don't think I'm confused, but I'm thinking right now that yes, you're going to have to pay money, depending on how long or what's your household income.

So let me give you an example, Minister. I sent you an email in, probably September, and this is a couple who had their 50th anniversary in Bonavista. Just let me use Alex and Mary Cullimore. They purchased land in '67 in Bonavista. In '68, they built a house. They live there today. Alex and Mary in Bonavista may have an out because of certificate. But if Alex and Mary were living in Plate Cove East, Plate Cove West, in Tickle Cove, in Old Bonaventure, in New Bonaventure, if they lived in Port Rexton, I would think that they may not all be getting certificates. Those people past '77 are going to have to pay on a household income scale.

I asked last night how much money would you have accosted for those people who you deem to be living now on what might be Crown lands are going to have to pay to get the title to their property. I thought that was a fair question.

We talked about the Diamonds here. No less than \$10,000. I can cite some figures here based on the sliding scale that you had in your backgrounder. I think the figure that I read out last night was the fact that someone with \$25,000 or less money, then they still have to pay a considerable amount of money. Household income of \$25,000 or less, they'll still have to pay a fair amount of money to get their land clear title.

Now, you look back and said, since the beginning of time and you cited 1976, when the 20 years came in practice, let me give

you a little quote from that session. We've got a conversation between Joey Smallwood at that time and Minister Rousseau and Minister Rousseau was the one who was presenting this.

G. BYRNE: That's right, it wasn't Gerald.

C. PARDY: Minister Rousseau.

Anyway, here is what was said. Smallwood's concern was those people who may have had ownership before the 20-year period. There were many people who had many conservations going on, but here was Rousseau's comment – remember that's a 20-year period that we've had now since the beginning of time, our time anyhow – the most important principle of this bill is that nobody is trying to do anybody out of their land.

Just wait for the last sentence, what we are saying is, look, if you have had squatter's rights for 20 years, why do you need another 40 years? Minister, you mentioned it was a 60-year litmus test and it went down to 20. Let us clear it up so we know that land belongs to John Jones or John Q. Citizen. We are going to give it to you after 20 years.

Chair, we are going to give it to you after 20 years, no charge. We are going to give it to you after 20 years, Rosseau. But remember the evolution of time – and I mentioned last night it was not every premier, but it was Brian Tobin who brought it in and he brought it in and he said we're going to have market value. That was the change. Anybody in the legal field would know that was the change going forward, people had to pay.

Chair, people on the Bonavista Peninsula are going to have to pay thousands upon thousands upon thousands of dollars, based on what my understanding would be of what has been presented by the minister – thousands of dollars. I'm not sure, my colleague for Baie Verte - Green Bay said

Notre Dame. Certificate, no problem, that's what his response was.

If he gives out these certificates, like he just referenced to Notre Dame, to those areas on the Bonavista Peninsula, like Old Bonaventure, New Bonaventure, Plate Cove East, Plate Cove West, open to all, Tickle Cove, all those early settled communities, we're probably okay. But if he's not and we have to pay the sliding scale based on income, it's going to cost people. Lots of people don't have that 10 years, because they built halfway through it and they've been on it since then for decades. They've got to pay and that is what our concern is.

At a time where Crown Lands doesn't have any idea what land they own, but the people on the Bonavista Peninsula, to prove that you own it, we're going to give you a quitclaim and you pay a percentage of the market value of your land and you pay it to the Crown. That is what we have a problem with.

Now, if the minister can highlight it and make it less confusing for us, as he said it was, then we're open to hear his interpretation of that. Is it going to cost us money? These people aren't squatters. These aren't squatters, they bought their land.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

G. BYRNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In the minutes that we have before we may take a recess, I'll return after with some additional comments, but there's a pattern developing here which I see that must be addressed, which is that there is some basic information that has been conveyed to the public that the hon. Members opposite just have not absorbed or have not listened to.

Dispossession is available in areas beyond Bonavista or Prescott Street of St. John's. That is the plan. For those areas within areas that clearly the Crown has been dispossessed throughout all of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are prepared – and the act specifically empowers this – to offer a certificate of dispossession for those areas, beyond what has been used as examples. So that has been made perfectly clear.

What I'd like to say to the hon. Member who suggested that processing times will be added, incrementally, by each and every 30-day period that will pass because of a new referral, what the hon. Member fails to understand is that these things are not done in sequence. They are done simultaneously. That is the way this gets done. There referral goes out to all departments simultaneously. The simultaneousness of this all requires a 30-day response.

If the hon. Member had to have come to the briefing we had with this and if one question was asked of the government briefers by the Opposition Members about any aspect of this legislation and if that was one of the questions that they asked, then would have gotten that as an answer. They did not ask one question, not one.

In fact, I estimate since the beginning of the fall session, there have been 160 questions posed by the Opposition to the government since the opening of the fall session, not one has been on Crown lands, not one.

So with that said, I will say that the Opposition wants to empower public servants and that can occur right now, I agree, but, also, we need to have discretion. That is the purpose of the tribunal, because as the hon. Member says: empower public servants and give them the final say and let them do their job. What contradicts that is if they also support, like I do and we do, a tribunal process, which says that sometimes the public servants may not necessarily

interpret correctly the evidence, so that's why we have a tribunal process.

So with that said, in the situations where an application is received late – and the hon. Member laments this, he laments the fact that the application was cancelled because it was received late, because the statute, the legislation, prior to this amendment, or prior to this bill, had very specific finite deadlines prescribed in law. Well, one Member opposite says this should not be; when, in fact, his leader says, it should be enshrined in legislation. The two Members opposite should get together and have a conversation, because they are contradicting each other.

With that said, the Crown *Lands Act*, yes, there were some pretty brilliant people that were involved in it, and it makes it very, very –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: – difficult to contradict them. These very, very brilliant people – and nobody is questioning that – what they said, Madam Chair, is that Crown lands –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

G. BYRNE: – squatters' rights should die –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

G. BYRNE: No, no, they shall not. They shall not suppress me. They shall not fetter me. They shall not bring me to a hook. I shall speak, because what these very, very brilliant people said is, and the advice that I'm not accepting, is that they say kill squatters' rights. Do not make it easier for applicants to obtain adverse possession, and for those that may still be able to squeak through that window, make sure that

it's at least a \$10,000 expense, even just to put in an application.

No, Madam Chair, no, I will not take the advice of those who would make this process much, much harder if not impossible to achieve. This is a set of amendments that actually make it easier. The Members opposite are advocating – they're insisting – on a hard stop to rules that those who do not meet the test of adverse possession in a way that is not amended, that is a difficult way to achieve, that they should be brought to court.

This side says empathy is the way to make this happen, while reflecting exactly what they said, this is a public good, the public owns land, the public shall get a return on its property. This is a balance between those two things.

Madam Chair, let's go have a great supper.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this Committee rise and report progress.

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

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 directed me to report some progress and ask leave to sit again on Bill 68.

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

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee ask leave to sit again?

J. HOGAN: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, that this House do recess until 6:30.

SPEAKER: This House do stand in recess until 6:30 this evening.