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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Tuesday

March 4, 2025
(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6:30 p.m.

Resolution

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

“Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

Admit visitors.

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$3,949,634,900.”

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 105.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Chair. I’m a little slow getting out of the chair.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to debate Bill 105.

I just wanted to stand and speak and follow up with what the minister had commented from my time in visiting during his media scrum. My scrum at the end did not say anything about the crab price negotiations. There was no mention of the crab price negotiations occurring between the Association of Seafood Producers and the FFAW. Never did I ever mention that and never would I suggest that we be involved unless asked by the two parties as they may be stuck.

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.’

Just to elaborate further on what I said in a short time, would it not make sense if the fishing industry and, in particular, the snow crab is valued as much as close to a billion as what you’ve got, and because that’s our flagship species, don’t we as a province have skin in the game to make sure that everything moves along, processing opens and harvesters catch their catch?

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!

I never once said there was a percentage attached on what our involvement would be, nor the federal government. The federal government stated that they’re going to be there to support industry. I didn’t hear that here and maybe I missed that; all I’m saying is that all four parties have got skin in the game, we do, the federal government, the harvesters and the processors – nothing more than that.

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 105, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

One report asked: How much will you give the industry and the processors? That wasn't the contention, but when we look at the risk that's involved with opening and operationalizing the industry, there is a degree of risk and if someone said that four parties can't get together with everyone doing a part, the industry can open. It can operate.

If I hear the minister correctly, leave it to the price negotiations. There may be some other facts but leave it to them, they'll discuss the price. Imagine the difficulty in arranging a mutually agreeable price between the two bodies, without tariffs that we know of, but imagine now not knowing the markets and knowing there's a 25 per cent tariff on it and you're going to sit down now to navigate that but the minister is correct that it should be their go at it first.

I know that on the news tonight, the executive director of the Association of Seafood Producers, I think he all but stated we need to sit together to make sure that we've got the risk mitigation down pat, not wait that the fishers or the processors – well the fishers in particular – have got to come back to the Confederation Building. Let's get it done.

Let's sit down and talk and say what are the four parties and how much do we have in this and, once we sit down together, you probably can understand that the two critical parties can say, yes, we can proceed with that. That was my contention.

I didn't stick around because, as the Government House Leader would know, I had to leave the newsroom and head straight to the Audit Committee meeting. That's where I was headed so I didn't stick around, and it wasn't a courtesy thing or I didn't want to hear what the minister's rebuttal was – I would certainly, but I knew it was going to hold up the Audit Committee meeting.

In a couple of things I had mentioned earlier, the minister made it quite clear he wants the commercial cod fishery ended. He wants to end it. The government position is to end it. I would say excuse me if I'm a little confused.

They had the protest on there when the announcement that the commercial fishery was opening. The Premier came out. I don't know but the then Fisheries minister came out and spoke and said, ridiculous. They did focus on foreign trawlers, which we know there are no foreign trawlers inside the 200-mile limit, but outside, 98 per cent of the northern cod is caught by Newfoundlanders – Newfoundland families that would be having the trawlers.

It appeared that they were dead opposed to it and they were standing with the harvesters but then comes the FFAW's challenge in court. The FFAW's challenge in court, all of a sudden, started a real run on the materials that were associated with the decision-making on the northern cod and opening the commercial, and out comes the letter from the provincial government.

The same crew over in government now said, we are in favour of it. We want it to open. Speaking to a person in the federal minister's office, they were saying, oh, there's been lots of communication from the provincial government on opening the commercial northern cod. They came out, they were opposed to it. At the same time, they wrote a letter which came out with the FFAW.

I would say that questions the transparency. That's not quite upfront. If you've got a government that writes that they're all in favour of it, pressures the federal government to open it, as soon as we got harvesters protesting, all of a sudden they're coming out, dead set against it – should never be, big mistake, another colossal mistake.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: And I would say that is not the way you ought to roll. That's not the way you ought to roll, but that wasn't good.

As if that wasn't the only one, let me share this one with you. The residents watching and some harvesters, we know that a contentious issue was the marine protected areas. I went and attended the national aquaculture conference in St. John's at the Sheraton Hotel. I attended it, the Premier got up and spoke and said – quote – marine protected areas interfering with the fishery, not on my watch.

I said: Woah, that was strong. He got a lot of support from the aquaculture crew that was there. That was wonderful. I didn't have a chance to speak, but what I was thinking was when I did Estimates and the Leader of the Third Party asked a question to the minister, the minister deferred it to the deputy minister. The deputy minister asked and said he was co-chair of the federal committee looking at the marine protected areas. Now, think about it, and I can read the excerpt.

I think from a climate change perspective, one of the biggest things, or I guess where that is discussed the most, is our consultation on marine protected or marine conservation areas. Then there's also collaboration on coastal and ocean policy development. Here's the kicker. The deputy minister then and now, of the current minister says, I know that I co-chaired the group.

Now, that is a transparency issue and then the minister stood up lots of times with the people on the opposite side playing politics. I would say that is a transparency issue on two accounts.

I never got to the cod, but I tell you one thing he mentioned today was one of these supplementary submissions that he made to the fisheries committee – at the news conference today, the minister said he made a submission – five points – and one

of them was he wanted more research on the seal-cod prey relationship. Now, listen, I strongly disagree that we need more science on the seal-cod predation relationship. We don't need that.

Look at all the newsletters that government put out related to the sealing. Not one had any significance – not one. Ten years since I've been here, since 2019, not one with any significance.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

This is wonderful. We're having a fantastic discussion about the fishery, which is so important to do. It's so timely. I rarely get to be able to get to speak and direct a rebuttal to Members of the Opposition because they rarely speak about the fishery, but tonight is an exception and it's incredible. That's awesome.

With that said, Madam Chair, I will explain – I'll use more delicate language. I will convey to the hon. Member why it is that a commercial fishery designation is so harmful and hurtful that the industry itself, our harvesters, have concluded it should not be a commercial fishery. As we know, within the international fora of NAFO while there is no legal definition or precedent to the establishment of what defines a commercial fishery, the designation of a commercial fishery does, indeed, invoke the right of NAFO to then re-enter into the fishery and assume its historic role or entitlements to our northern cod.

So before the hon. Member missteps and misspeaks further, what I'll say to the hon. Member is that the entire province should be consumed and supportive of the

revocation of a commercial fishery designation because it allowed foreign factory freezer trawlers, foreign bottoms into our northern cod fishery. That's why all of us who understand this issue always state and state clearly that it should return to a science-based fishery. If that were the case, we would not be in a difficult situation of having the foreign factory freezer bottoms on our grounds.

So that's the fundamental reason why the entire industry, those who support the inshore, are always advocating for an end to the commercial fishery and a resumption to the science-based fishery. So that's the first one. The next point is we all argue – we should all argue in common voice – that the first 115,000 metric tons are the exclusive purview of the inshore.

Now, Madam Chair, I have been benefited to or should be criticized for bearing witness to 30 years of this history where I saw and heard evidenced that the federal Government of Canada maintain an absolute clear position through the generations while our moratorium was in place, that the first 115,000 metric tons of northern cod was the exclusive purview of the inshore.

I could recount that history verbatim. But I'll never forget the time that I sat – I was in the room when the assistant deputy minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Mr. David Bevan, said to committee under oath that was the policy of the government. That was 2008.

I had the opportunity to bear witness to the 2022 northern cod management plan, where the federal government put in black-letter language – black ink – that the first 115,000 metric tons of northern cod was for the exclusive purview of the inshore. That's not ancient history. I could go back from ancient history to current history.

There are even some that would suggest that back in 1978, there was a historic

northern cod conference held in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, where it was suggested that at that moment and at that point in time, there was a two-thirds, one-third split, that there was a decision that was taken.

The offshore industry, by the way, actually advocates this, or some members of the offshore industry advocate that there was actually a decision back in 1978 that said that two-thirds inshore, one-third offshore.

Well, as you dig deep into that fallacy, that fraud, what you find out is that there was a discussion paper that suggested that might be a consideration. To go from a discussion paper to saying that, verbatim, this was a fact, is a pretty far stretch which indicates how far some will go to fabricate a fraud. Notwithstanding all of that, what we also know to be true is that, at times, we'd never want to be left barren. We never want to be left wanting if ever there's a situation where the Canadian quota cannot be caught by the inshore.

We always want to have it built into the management plan that in only those instances, on a spot basis to prevent northern cod being left uncaught and left in the water, we would consider at that point in time offshore involvement in the first 115,000 metric tons for the very specific reason that the moment that we leave fish in the water uncaught, that's the moment that the EU, the international community, comes and parasitizes our inability to catch it, and then say, you can't catch it, We can. Give it to us. We're taking it.

So that's the whole reason why there is a nuance position in some respects about the offshore. The first 115,000 metric tons are exclusively the domain of the inshore. It's written in stone, three generations deep, three decades deep; that's the way it is. There's no ambiguity about that. Some may want to confuse it, and for their own purposes of gains, but that is the historic position.

Where does the offshore come in in the first 115,000: only in the instance if there's a situation where there are fish left in the water. We would rather have our own Canadian and Newfoundland and Labrador interests take it out of the water before it becomes weaponized as a tool by the international community to take it from us. That's not a significantly nuance position, that's a reasonable position, but here we have a situation where there is sometimes considered a dichotomy: If you don't have offshore catching the fish, certain plants won't be able to have access to it.

Plants in Newfoundland and Labrador have enjoyed the benefit of northern cod and inshore processing for the last 30 years because of the inshore. That can continue. To suggest that without the presence of the offshore there will be jobs lost in plants and so on, that is a false assertion because there will always be the inshore to be able to deliver what they've been doing for three decades.

With that said, the offshore does indeed have significant quotas in the offshore of redfish, of halibut, of turbot, of witch flounder, of yellowtail to make an around-the-year plant. What would be awesome; what would be absolutely excellent, and intended, is for the offshore to land that fish in Newfoundland and Labrador plants and then have those jobs 12 months; because there are plants that lease offshore quotas and gain benefit for those offshore quotas but choose to simply lease them out on a royalty arrangement and never, ever catch them.

That is an issue, so I applaud companies like Icewater and the community of Arnold's Cove and every plant worker there and want to say to them, we have your back. The way we have your back is maximization of the resources of Newfoundland and Labrador for everybody's benefit.

So, Madam Chair, this is not an issue where we should confuse and draw divisions on

this. This is an issue where we, as a Legislature, can be very much affirmed in that Newfoundland and Labrador's resources must stay Newfoundland and Labrador's resources but, at the same time, respecting the diversity of the industry. The 115,000-metric-ton exclusivity of the inshore has been established and it shall stay; this government stands by that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I guess we're now in unprecedented times. We're here just talking about Interim Supply to cover off the next so many months until we have a budget in the House of Assembly, but one of the things that we discussed and we talked about is housing and how important it is that, right now, we have probably one of the lowest amounts of available houses in recent history.

I think the last time we got down to this within the data from CHMC was predating the cod moratorium. So we haven't actually been to this point in quite some time and now we're also going down an unprecedented path of what is the future going to hold when it comes to free trade and the economy of this province and the country as a whole.

Free trade was a part of NAFTA and everything like that. It existed for the entirety of my lifetime so it's a very unprecedented time that we're about to face, and now we know that starting tomorrow, I think, maybe – whatever the US president wakes up and feels like doing that day – we're also going to have steel tariffs on top of the existing Canadian tariffs. For a place like Labrador West, that's not good because now we have double the tariffs on Canadian steel.

This is a very unprecedented thing. I think the last time tariffs of anything were that

high between any country of North America was the Great Depression. So we're heading down a path that we thought we learned from but I guess, once again, when the American president wakes up in the morning and does what he feels like, all the economics can just go out the window.

We look at what effect that will have. Obviously, construction costs are going to go up. Obviously, we're going to see how our supply of goods and stuff – especially the construction industry and the manufacturing industry will be very concerning but also very stretched on supply, but also are American manufacturers going to buy steel from us or are they going to try to get it from somewhere else?

It's going to really throw off the supply chain. What's going to happen is we're going to actually have a very compressed construction industry and compressed construction season coming up because supply chain issues are going to be unprecedented. This also means it goes back to the house building industry. We have a very limited amount of housing now in this province that we need to try to balance the both of those things there.

So, once again, we talk about tariffs and stuff but also the stuff that we can do to help mitigate that. We're going to have to ask and see that both the provincial and federal government step up and actually make sure that they help address those challenges as they're going to be and what the costs associated with those challenges are going to be when it comes to the construction industry, especially the house building and rental unit building, because we are very stretched now with our populations.

In my district alone, we don't have any rental units – zero. We have nothing available, but I have so much job vacancy in both the service industry, health care, education and government services alone.

That's on top of all the vacancies in mine services and mining industry.

We really need to know where can we move forward to make sure that we land in a softer spot but also that we help to support things like mining and manufacturing and all those other industries for this province because they need people but they're also going to have some people who need somewhere to live. You see their job postings and a lot of postings that I have never seen before now are starting to say fly-in fly-out available.

So the job posting that normally would be a job that would be available in Lab West by a company, because they're not covered by any benefits agreements or anything like that, they're now starting to post fly-on fly-out options available. So we can see where not having housing in a region and not having the ability to construct or anything for encouragement being able to construct new housing and stuff, we are already seeing now, I guess, another thing chipping away at the community.

So this is where we look at things like construction and how these tariffs, without a plan in place and without the resources available, we're going to see this kind of thing happen. I mean, we move into the other parts of it as well, about groceries, about food and that. There is stuff that is not grown in Canada anymore or anything like that. There is some import there. But now we have to find obviously alternatives. But we're also going to have to find other markets for that stuff as well. So, you know, we have to make sure that we're prepared in our network through our province for food, but also the associated cost that may come with that as well.

When you talk about the importance of including community groups and stuff into these discussions, that can help support that and also help provide advice, as we move forward through these things. It's very unprecedented times. We never thought this

would ever be possible, but after seeing what's going on yesterday, I guess anything is probably possibly now down there.

Growing up in a time where NAFTA was just an acronym that everyone knew and understood and now we're in a time where all that's out the window, but we have to forge a path forward as a country and as a province to find ways to address some of these things that are going to happen. You know, we're only on day two – well, almost day two, midnight tonight. We have to be able to find these things, but also to protect the citizens.

Another thing, too, is we'll see rising costs in goods and services and things like that, but we also need to find other ways to make sure we mitigate other things on the other end, make sure that there's money in people's pockets because we have to continue to spur our own economy and our regional economies as well. So making sure that people have money, make sure that it's not being drained and everything through all the other additional costs, it's to make sure we put stuff back in.

Once again, I'll mention – and I'll keep mentioning it – that removing taxation from essential goods and things like that, we seen it with the HST holiday from the federal government and, I guess, encouraging them to keep doing that, is we seen some of the preliminary things that came out: taking some of that HST off food. There are some things that are not taxed anyway in HST, but there is stuff in a grocery store that you think isn't taxed but actually is taxed.

During the HST holiday, people realized that this stuff did have taxes removed, and we did see an actual encouragement of people being able to buy more groceries, but also they were able to have money in their pocket which helped spur things along. So this is something that we continue to push forward.

Same thing with essential services, like residential electricity, home heating oil, things like that that we can find ways to mitigate that risk and put money back into the people's pockets to help them through these times, and also it helps encourage our local economy as well. Because when people have a bit of disposable income, we know that they go out and buy essentials and things like that. A lot of essentials and stuff are local.

This is why we need to put money back into people's pockets so that they will buy local, so they can have the ability to buy local. We can make sure that we spur our local economy and encourage Newfoundland and Labrador businesses that do provide things so that the people in Newfoundland and Labrador have the income to actually buy those things. We need to work in ways to make sure that people are able to buy local and encourage them to buy local. If they don't have the ability they, can't do it.

We will see, like I said, a lot of big changes and things like that but we have to encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that we will get through it but also that the local economy is there for them and local businesses are there for them. We need to make sure that there is support for local businesses to move forward and make sure that they are able to, one, keep up with demand but also, two, is to make sure that they can weather a lot of the storm as well.

It's encouraging that we want the best for Newfoundland and Labrador. We want to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador business can thrive and we want to continue to encourage buy local, both buy Canadian, buy Newfoundland and Labrador and we can show a message that, as unfortunate as things are to our American friends down there, their current leadership is going to continue to create storms that were never really supposed to be there in the first place.

This upheaval is unprecedented but, at the same time, we will make sure that as a

Newfoundland and Labrador, as a Canadian's voice know that we don't agree and will try to do everything in our power to make sure that we protect our residents from the unprecedentedness that comes forward.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Chair.

During the break, I was watching the NTV news and it was interesting their top five, six, seven, eight stories were about what I frankly feel is the most important topic here today. For the last 200 years, we've had an ally, a nation that we are so intertwined from families to business, to research to peaceful collaboration and, in times of war, we have served on the same side. It's interesting, the criticism of the Opposition. You just have to watch the NTV news this evening to see really what is so important to speak about tonight, and that's what I'm going to speak about in my next few minutes.

I wanted to start with some of our leaders in our country. I'm going to go right to the prime minister. I guess I'm getting my inspiration today as I'm eating because, during lunch, I ran over for a burger and I was listening to an interview by the prime minister. I thought this was a really important statement he has made. His minister and other leaders in this country have made some very interesting statements but his statement that really resonated with me today was one of the reporters asked him, do you feel that these tariffs are related, as the president suggests, to fentanyl?

His answer – and I'm going to paraphrase it a little bit, he said, if this really was about fentanyl and the terrible destruction of this illegal drug that it's causing to the people of the United States and to Canada, by the way, the so-called president of the United

States would not have stated a few minutes later that there is nothing that Canada or Mexico could do to stop his implementation of this economic attack on our countries.

I thought that was absolutely brilliant. How can you say, in one hand, I'm concerned about drugs and I need to send you guys an economic signal and then say but there's nothing you can do about it? Obviously, there's another agenda.

I've had an interesting career. I want to talk about two individuals that I've been around. I've never shook either man's hand; however, I've had a lot in interaction with them and their influence in the world.

One was Mr. Putin. I've indicated in the past that I worked 14 years in the Soviet Union. I'd probably still be working there, had it not been for this gentleman. We were guiding Canadian companies into the Soviet Union, former states associated with it and so on. When he showed up – and I won't get into all those details – at first the West welcomed a strong, Centrist power and we thought, okay, now we'll get some more organization. Because, at the time, we had 89 oblasts and republics going in 89 different directions. It was very difficult for Canada and any other nation to try to deal with them during glasnost and perestroika.

Along comes Putin, this great strength. Strange background in terms of KGB trade and so on but we said, okay, this is great. I was in the room with him twice and, at that time – and this is about 20 years ago – we were welcoming that and thinking that we're getting finally some consistent reaction in terms of as we were guiding investment in Russia, particularly in the north where I was working.

However, within a few years, it quickly became clear there were other agendas at play. It became so unstable for us to guide, escort, provide advice and wisdom for Canadians, including many people from this province into that country, we had to pull out

– 2004 we stopped – 14 years we had to stop because of that leader.

I then found myself a few years later with the company that I was working with, and we'd been doing very well, building ourselves up. Then in 2008 we were bought out by a very large international company, North American-based. This is in October-November of 2008, I was the area manager for Labrador, and I received a letter saying welcome to the big company, this is great and, by the way, if any of you have anything to do with the Trump group of companies – no kidding, 17 years ago – you will cease and desist that work right now. You will tear up your contract, you will close it out, because this guy, this group of companies do not pay their bills. They will run you into court, there'll be no opportunity for compensation for your good hard work and so on.

It's amazing that I find myself standing here tonight, talking about these two so-called leaders and their egomaniacal ways and how it's come to this situation here tonight.

The Premier was on BBC yesterday, he had an interesting interview; several excellent comments, and as we've all said, we're going to miss him. I think regardless of your political stripe you will recognize that he's leaving at a time when we'd all like him to stay. That's not a bad situation to find yourself in, but as a province obviously we've appreciated that leadership.

He had a great line yesterday in response to one of the questions from this BBC journalist. They said, do you think we're still going to be friends with the United States? I was thinking to myself how I'd answer that. As I started off my comments, you know, family. I have relatives who are Americans, friends. We've worked on research collaborative projects together.

Now I'll drift over to Labrador and how we're going to feel from these tariffs. We've been involved, and this House has heard me

– speak many times of the role of 5 Wing Goose Bay from a NORAD perspective, from a NATO contribution, shared airspace. Then we can go, and my colleague for Labrador West was just speaking about, and he has spoken eloquently about the mining resources, our energy warehouse. We are a powerhouse. Seafood, the minister was just speaking about that. I mean, in our region, where there's some 6 per cent of the population, I can tell you we're going to feel this.

Just two or three weeks ago I was with Vale as they celebrated moving into the underground: the completion of the massive investment that they've made in their nickel, cobalt and copper deposit in Northern Labrador. And now as they move into this next phase of going underground, how important that's going to be for Vale, how important it's going to be for Labrador, our province, the country and so on. And by the way, so many of those minerals, very important, of course, for the American market.

I look to my colleague again from Labrador West, talk about iron ore and the contribution towards steel. Actually, we use this term green steel but in terms of its purity and so on, relatively speaking, this is a great product and we're very proud of it. There are so many other resources, throughout Labrador that are so important, the seafood, the minister just spoke about it. The role we play in Goose Bay with our airport and all the transatlantic traffic, so much of that is American and all these air spaces.

You can just see how the sabre-rattling, this breakdown in diplomacy and what that's going to have implications for in so many walks of life.

I wanted to say that I've been able to maintain, as best I can, relations with so many friends in Russia, where I worked for all those years. I'm certainly going to be continuing to do that with the United States.

The answer that the Premier gave to the BBC yesterday was exactly that. We will get through this. This is going to be a difficult challenge for us all and we have to recognize that while there's going to be a lot of resentment, probably a lot of booing when we hear that American anthem and so on. We have to recognize there's still a lot of good people. A lot of good people who voted in a way, I thought, with the realization of their role, the important role this country in the world, as opposed to the self interests that I would suggest motivated so much of the support for this character that we have to deal with.

I want to also compliment, in my remaining time, the initiatives of our government, provincial, federal and I'm talking about all governments across this country and private sector. People like Danny Dumaresque, yeah okay, I can be accused of a partisan swipe, but Mr. Dumaresque has been over in Europe promoting his seafood products. Investing in developing those markets. Moving forward we all have to start moving as quickly as we can, and we all do something to contribute.

My final thought is, I think, it was 2002-2003, I found myself with other American, Norwegian, French and, I think, British scientists and engineers just outside of Chernobyl. We were working with 40 nuclear, chemical and biological weapon scientists from Ukraine. The world was at a loss. It was an amazing honour to be there. It was about a month-long project. I sat across from these individuals, my Russian is good enough that I could converse with these folks and try to understand what they knew that we could use in a civilian application. We couldn't come up with very much.

Our recommendation – and this was the collective, the Americans, the British, Canadian and so on – was to take these people – because we did not want them to fall into the hands of rogue states, North Korea, some others that I can mention. We

needed to send them to a stable place where they would be nice and secure, and humanity and society could be much more stable.

Our recommendation was to give them each \$1 million dollars and set them up on a ranch in California down in the United States. I now find myself sitting here today wondering, you know, are we really dealing with an ally anymore? I find I'm questioning. Maybe I'm going to the extreme, but as the Premier said some time ago, these insulting comments about us being the 51st state are not just off base, they're insulting, and unfortunately this gentleman seems to mean business. So I welcome us all in standing up where we can.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Geopolitics is all about leverage, and there's no way a country or an individual can make themselves safer in the world unless they fix things at home. We sit here tonight, and we talk about what we can do, and I found it funny that on the news this evening, the Member for Labrador West came out and shockingly said I can't believe that the Conservatives never asked about tariffs. We're concerned about tariffs – and I will tell you what else – we're concerned about industry; we're concerned about the fishery; we're concerned about tourism; we're concerned about all of those things.

I look back at a time when I say we need to fix things at home, and I think about health care and the health care crisis we've been in for quite some time. I would argue maybe seven or eight years, pre-COVID. But what happened then? We came out of COVID; we blamed it on COVID. We blamed the doctor shortage on what was happening in

the rest of the world, and we said Canada is the reflection of what's happening in Newfoundland. The problem was here at home, and we didn't fix it.

Oil: we lost our refinery, and I'm sure the Finance Minister would love to get up after and talk about *Advance 2030* and the 650 wells that she boasted about back in 2017 or '18 – or 2019, I think, when she did her first or second budget and said we have 650 finds offshore that were equal to or bigger than Hebron that we were going to develop, and they disappeared. Why did they disappear?

Well they went away because the Liberal government didn't support them. They didn't get developed because of a green future and the alignment with the federal Liberals. They didn't get developed because the Member for Labrador West voted against oil and gas and so did his leader. When you live in the most industrial portion of the province that depends on thermal generation, and everyone that works there depends on it and you vote against it and then you come out today and you say I wonder why they didn't talk about tariffs.

The Member for Lake Melville just talked about what we're dealing with going forward with Donald Trump and do you know what? He's bang on. He is 100 per cent right. He is a scary man and he doesn't care about us not one little, tiny bit. We all need to realize that but, in that, we also need to realize that we need to worry about the people we are here to look after and fix things inside of our own home.

When we talk about things such as health care and the shortages, I'll say people have heard me talk here about my district but my district is reflective of the whole province and I don't think anyone here can argue it. If you're not getting the phone calls, as my hon. colleague from Holyrood said earlier, it's because you're not answering your phone or listening to your messages.

As of today going into March and April, G.B. Cross in Clarenville has no internal medicine for two months. That means everyone is diverted. Now, I just went through a situation with a doctor personal to me where we were talking about a surgery that has to happen and his response was: You realize that the diversions from Clarenville are going to cancel the surgeries here in St. John's because if we're bringing internal medicine patients out here from rural Newfoundland, we're not going to have the beds to put people up that need surgery.

So it is a trickle-down effect. It is something that affects each and every one of us every single day. It's funny, I got to go back and I don't even know why we talk about Labrador West housing. Housing will solve issues in Labrador West. They can't get teachers because they can't get houses. They can't get doctors because they can't get houses. They can't get houses because they can't get electricity and it cost too much.

Yet, we go out and we sign an MOU for Churchill Falls that doesn't include immediate power that allows us to start development right away, which is what they need. We negotiate with Quebec and instead of making a part of it saying, we want power right now, we overlooked that. We could solve an issue immediately. Goose Bay has a similar problem and yet, we overlook that. We need to fix the problems that exist inside our own house.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Does that mean tariffs aren't going to affect us? They are going to affect us in a big way. Everyone should be worried whether you work in the fishery – if you work in any industry here whatsoever, they will have grave and dire effects on us.

But do you know what? We got other issues. We got people that are trying to come out of Labrador or commute across their own province that can't afford to do it.

We're concerned about an increase in the price of something now when we haven't been one bit concerned about the increase that affected Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the last 10 years. We haven't done a thing.

I know the Members Opposite are going to say, we've done lots. We've increased the seniors' tax and we put \$500 million in here – oh and don't forget Muskrat Falls did all of this to us. There's no question we have a spending problem and a part of that was created by Muskrat Falls, but we listened to the CEO of Newfoundland Hydro sit here and say it was a good project. We heard it.

Now I'll ask you something else and it's a very simple question: Where would we be today without Muskrat Falls? Would Churchill Falls expansion be happening? Would Gull Island be happening? Probably not, there'd be no framework for Gull Island to happen because the whole idea, and it was said here in the MOU, was the Gull Island project could only go ahead because Muskrat Falls was already in place. They're operating off the same program.

We listened tonight to people say, we have never seen anything like this before. Well I would say this, most of the people on that side were here, I wasn't, in 2018 when Trump introduced tariffs. It happened back then. So here it is, seven years later, it's happening again.

This isn't the first time that this happened and for some reason memories are short. It's not the first time that Trump introduced tariffs but here we go, replay. Obviously, the hot tub time machine isn't working right now but this has happened before. If you flash back to 2018, you'll get right where you need to be. In 2019, we presented, in this House of Assembly, a community benefits program overwhelmingly accepted by 100 per cent of the Members in this House. Where is it today?

I can tell you where it is. It's on the shelf with a lot of other reports and PMRs and stuff that came through this House, not actioned. We do not look after our own. You go out right now, to Central Newfoundland where the gold mine is being built and you talk to the company, Gisborne, who is out there doing the mechanical outfitting. You talk to the individuals who are trying to get work there and look at the amount of workers who are there from British Columbia doing pipefitting, welding and sheet metal work. Newfoundlanders are sitting at home and we haven't said a word about it.

Here was the solution that was presented in this House and overlooked and not looked after: We said 85 per cent of all the work had to be performed by Newfoundlanders, procurement by Newfoundlanders. That's fine, but what we suggested was it was on each element of each contract that was put out. Every contract that was let should have had that 85 per cent cap on it.

Instead of that, it was 85 per cent overall. What did these companies do? They come in, they hire the cheapest labour that they can hire from Newfoundland and Labrador in order to offset and that eliminates their requirement for 85 per cent. Then, they bring their employees from home and we're supposed to sit here and expect that the Churchill Falls MOU and the creation of Gull Island is going to create 10,000 to 12,000 jobs with only 20 million man-hours, I think – which is really bad math if you do it – that's going to work for us?

We got to fix things at home. We hear it every single day. When I go home tonight I know my phone is going to be inundated. I'll have messages from people with health care issues. I'll have messages with people whose roads weren't plowed, who got broken tires, who got leaks. I'll have messages from people who can't afford to pay their heat bills anymore, who can't afford groceries, who can't get the health care they need, whose loved one is lying

out in the hall of a hospital, whose loved one is in a long-term care facility somewhere where they shouldn't be.

It's an ongoing thing and we've had this discussion for seven years now. We've all heard it. I'm certain that everyone here has heard it, and do you know what? I don't for one second believe that government is not trying to address these things but everything that we address in this House is important. If today it's tariffs as the most important thing that we face, we knew about that before Christmas and yet, today is when we face it.

When we came in here on January 6 for the debate on Churchill Falls it wasn't brought up once. I'll tell you, before we sign any MOU, if there was any thought of tariffs that were coming and there was any thought that those tariffs could have affected the dismal prices that we're going to get from the Churchill Falls MOU, then it never should've been signed or voted on.

Instead, it was pushed through, tariffs are hanging over our heads. We're being –

S. COADY: MOU.

L. PARROTT: Listen, I know what it is. I know it's an MOU but maybe you should read the Quebec newspaper that calls it an agreement in principle. Two separate things and nobody from your side can answer that. So you can get up and talk about it after, Minister, all you want – all you want.

B. PETTEN: Binding.

L. PARROTT: It's a binding MOU that locks us into Gull Island.

All of that aside, if tariffs are a threat and that could undermine that MOU or any negotiation going forward, it should be a massive concern for us. Everything we do should be a massive concern. We do no secondary processing, and it's been said in this House a million times, that is why we're

in the state we're in. We don't do secondary processing on anything and if we did, we wouldn't be in the situation we're in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. PARROTT: And the Member over there who's beaking off can get up and speak whenever he wants.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

I think the Conservative Opposition certainly seems a bit –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

S. COADY: Okay, reset the clock though.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

I think the Conservative Opposition is a bit sensitive that they didn't speak about tariffs today. It's probably the most important thing in the province and they didn't speak about it today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: They were too busy playing politics so I guess they are a bit sensitive tonight.

I'd like to talk about some of the ways that we've been fixing things in the province. I listened intently, as I always do, to Members opposite and I can tell you I heard from the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and I just had the pleasure of listening to the Member for Terra Nova, so allow me to

have a moment to tell you how things have improved in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now before I get into how things have improved in Newfoundland and Labrador, let me say to the listening audience, we're supposed to be speaking about Interim Supply. Interim Supply, really, is to ensure that the vital programs and services continue in this province while we debate a budget and that payments are made, but I'm hearing some confusion from the Opposition as to what Interim Supply actually is.

They've been speaking about some potential new measures. They've been talking about some government programs and whether or not they should continue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: I gave you the courtesy of listening.

AN HON. MEMBER: No you didn't.

S. COADY: I certainly did. Anyway, allow me to continue.

I will say that there is an Interim Supply bill before this House that will allow us to continue the vital programs and services. I hope all Members of this House vote in favour of the Interim Supply so those vital programs and payments to teachers, to doctors and to nurses can continue.

Speaker, I want to go to this, let's talk about fixing things at home, or as my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay said: What's your fiscal track record?

So allow me to take a moment. We have the highest nominal GDP that this province has ever seen. We have the highest retail sales that this province has ever seen. We have the highest capital investment that this province has ever seen. We have the highest employment that this province has ever seen and we have the lowest

unemployment that this province has ever seen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Allow me to tell you some more provincial fiscal indicators if we're going to talk about provincial fiscal indicators. I'm going to go back to when I became Minister of Finance. When I became Minister of Finance the deficit was 6.2 per cent of GDP – deficit.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

S. COADY: It was 6.2 per cent. It is now 0.4 per cent.

Now allow me to say how that compares with other provinces: PEI is 0.8 per cent, Nova Scotia is 0.8 per cent, Quebec is 1.5 per cent, Ontario is 0.9 per cent. What is ours? It is 0.4 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: A good fiscal indicator. Allow me to go more.

When I look at our expenses, our expenses five years ago when I started as Minister of Finance, the per cent of GDP – which is a really good indicator because everybody knows that GDP is a measure of economic health and growth – was 30 per cent. What are they now? It is 26 per cent – going in a good direction.

What was our debt expense five years ago as compared to today? Five years ago – a debt expense is a per cent of our revenue – 15 per cent. What is it today? It's 11 per cent by any measure. I have just given you a sample of some of the numbers that I can give you, so I will continue.

They questioned and oh, you know, this is terrible. We have evidence of that, and they quoted one very Conservative think tank. Allow me to tell you what the independent assessment of credit worthiness – the

Moody's, S&P Global and DBRS – did. They gave us a rating increase.

Chair, I'm going to give you some quotes from DBRS: They changed the trend on all long-term ratings to stable. This is back in 2023: This is the first time in 12 years that the province has received an upgraded credit rating and demonstrates the province's financial situation is moving in the right direction.

I can continue, Chair. I still have five minutes. I've got lots of time. Allow me to tell you the Conservative record. Let me keep going.

Now I'm going to go back to 2014-2015, the last year of the Conservative government. They were \$1 billion in deficits, Madam Chair, and do you know what the price of oil was? Nearly \$100 a barrel – nearly \$100 a barrel. Now, in '24-'25, do you know what our deficit is? It's \$218 million, and do you know what our price of oil is today? Our price of oil is down to \$74, basically.

So all I'm saying to the Members Opposite is I can show you the good statistics that give you good evidence that we are being financially and fiscally responsible. I can show you a lot of evidence of growth in our economy. Let me just talk about – because the Member Opposite talked about, my goodness, we spent \$171,000 in the Department of Population Growth. We should never have spent that \$171,000 on a \$10 billion budget. We should never have spent that.

Chair, we have attracted 24,000 new Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Kudos to the Minister of IPGS. Let's continue to attract people to this great province because more people want to live in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Allow me to give you some more. The current status of the

Newfoundland economy, we have an increase in new motor vehicle sales, year-over-year is 5.9 per cent; year-to-date is 21 per cent. Retail sales are up 7.2 per cent. Home sales are up 28.8 per cent. Manufacturing shipments up 89 per cent.

Let me go back to employment. If I go back a couple of years ago, 212,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were working. Do you know what that number is today, Chair? It is 230,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If I can go to labour force: 252,600 in 2022 and today, 264,200 – by any measure, progress.

Now, I can give all kinds of new quotes. I can keep going; I have two more minutes. I'll do that. Desjardin – quote – they should be commended for adhering to plans to balance the budget. Scotia Bank: "The strides made in transforming the province's finances are commendable, especially evident in prudent fiscal planning, resolution of the Muskrat Falls project, and establishment of the Future Fund."

Now allow me to say, we have almost \$400 million in a Future Fund – almost \$400 million. Guess who voted against us putting money aside in a Future Fund: the Conservative Opposition. We wouldn't have that almost \$400 million available to pay down debt because the Conservatives voted against it.

I can keep going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: I can keep going. I still have time. Allow me to do DBRS Morningstar: last year, we upgraded the province. We feel the province has made continued fiscal progress – continued fiscal progress. Chair, all I can say is, I think I've given evidence to the people of the province.

We almost need a fact checker in this House just like on CNN – You know how when the president speaks, there's a fact

checker? That's what we're going to have to have for the Opposition, because what I'm saying right now is by any fiscal measure – and I can keep going all night on this. I can show that we're being responsible.

We're being prudent. We're being, what I'm going to call, visionary. We are making strides towards a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient and sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador. I wish that they would come onside.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to get up and represent my district, the District of Ferryland, who voted me in here and certainly I will be bringing their concerns forward. It's something I've been doing since I came in here and hopefully will continue to do.

I will say that I'll touch on – I'm going to say a personal issue – when I, about two weeks ago, had to take my dad to the hospital. It was on a Monday night about 10:30. I got a call; he had a fever so they put him in an ambulance and took him out. I went out about an hour later and met him at the hospital when he was there. Well, I went out and waited in the hospital, and he was there for about an hour and a half, two hours.

One o'clock we get the ambulance driver to come out because they just had him there and they're waiting to dispatch him, I guess, or offload him when they go into the hospital. So that happened about 10:30, when the call came in, and about 1:00 they brought him out and said, well, can you watch him out in the waiting room at 1:00 in the morning. I said yeah, fine. But, you know, it's 1:00, he got dementia, he's 82.

I'm sitting there and I'm saying, b'y something's not right here. They have him

in an ambulance, they brought him out, now they bring him out to me to sit down and watch. He had a fever at the time, so we're not sure what's wrong. So, you know, my mother said, well, you take him out, you go with him. I said yeah, no problem.

So you go out and you sit there at 1:00 and I'm saying – look, I have it here in my phone. I took a picture, and I think I showed the guys the other day. The wait time was five to six hours, and I'll find it for you now. I'll just go back to it. The wait time was five to six hours – yeah, here it is. The current average wait time is five to six hours; less urgent is 10 to 11 hours. Now would I say he is urgent? No, probably not, but I have no idea. I'm not a doctor to be able to diagnosis him. But to wait 10 or 11 hours in the hospital with a dementia patient, 82 years old, not good.

So, you know, it's a bit disappointing. We're here to represent everybody in the province, and that kind of stuff happens. We've got to have a look – we've got to have a look; that's not acceptable. At 1:30, they come out in the emergency – and the people are doing a great job. Listen, you know what, it's hard to have empathy when you're in there because they get – when I walked in at 11:30, I couldn't believe the crowd. I could not believe it. When you walk in, you go to register at the desk when you go – normally when you go in to register. So down that hallway was full, the emergency room was full in chairs and the other room was full.

So I'm sitting down and there are three people from my district in there as well. So I'm not no different than anybody else. We've got to go in and wait as well. But it's disappointing and it's embarrassing. We should be here to fix these problems. That's our job. We're not doing that if we're in there 10 or 11 hours. When is 10 or 11 hours acceptable in our world anymore, to go into emergency? It's not acceptable. We should be fixing that and we're over here as Opposition and no one asks us. I speak to the minister, and everybody here has

spoken to the minister and he gets back to you but some of these problems we've got to get down and have a discussion or get a committee and get this fixed.

Do I know the answer? No, I don't but I'd like to be involved in fixing it. I'd like to be involved in fixing it because that's a big concern. All right? That's a big concern. I've got to tell you that's disappointing and at 1:30 the person inside comes out with a stack of files that high and I'm not kidding you and we're out in the second emergency room and he's standing up reading out the names. No. No answer. Lay it over here. No answer. Lay it over here. So by the time he finished that stack was half over here and half of them had left; half of them had left and he didn't call out my father's name at that time.

So that's where our health care is and that's where we've got to be concerned. That's where it starts. Once you get inside, everybody will tell you the same thing. The service is great but it's not inside. I couldn't bring that up to anybody else. You know, just speaking for my own side. There were three other people in my district that were in there and it's hard to bring up your own issues. They're got the same issues as I do.

It's relative to everybody that's in this House and we haven't fixed it. We should be looking at that to – do I know the solutions? No, I don't. I don't know how it starts inside the triage. I walked in to get him. When I brought him out, there was people asleep in the corridors, they're asleep on stretchers. It's embarrassing. Two or three people knew I was an MHA. They come over and they're chatting to you. You're trying to be cordial to people.

I don't know the answers, but we have to be able to fix it. We have to be able to fix them. I can't understand why we can't get together and do that. We sit here and throw out numbers and do everything we want to do but we have to be able to fix the problem. That is the problems you've got. Say it at

home. He said, at home, that's a home problem. We've got to get that fixed. I don't know how, but we've got to get it fixed and we should be looking. We should have a committee. We should be doing something to fix that problem and we're not doing it and it's embarrassing.

We're here to represent the people in our districts. I don't know. I'll move on.

I see the minister today when we – okay we didn't ask questions on tariffs. The questions we had were important. They're important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and that's why we're asking them. They're not – we've got to ask those questions. That's our job. We're elected here to do that. That is our job. I'm bringing up issues about a breakwater in Trepassey. I'm bringing up issues about Department of TI – Transportation. I'm bringing up about brush cutting. They're safety measures, some of that stuff. That's safety and we all have it. It's not only me. We all have it. You have it over there. You have those issues.

I come up with suggestions or bringing up stuff in this House that I think that could save you money, but we don't want to listen to it. I'm bringing it up to get it solved. I don't ever want to ask a minister for something unless it can be solved. I try to give you a solution and I would use one on brush cutting. All right? I'm gone from Health to Transportation and they're safety. It's all safety.

So brush cutting, we contract out brush cutting. They rent equipment all across the Island. They rent excavators and they can have attachments that they can buy to cut this brush cutting but they don't buy it, so they contract out. I don't know what the price is when they contract out but I'm sure that we can save some money in this. I'm sure we can. You drive along the Southern Shore right from Bay Bulls Big Pond or – well, Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove you don't have that issue with the brush cutting. It may be in some areas.

That's the other thing. Brush cutting is not needed everywhere but the people that are in these TI Departments they get laid off when the spring comes. They could be doing some of this stuff and this stuff goes away for eight or nine years until you have to cut it again.

AN HON. MEMBER: A good issue.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It's a good issue. Yes.

So, you know, it's a big issue but we have to be able to fix this problem. All right? We have to be able to fix this problem, if they bought an attachment that's probably \$60,000 or \$70,000 for this machine, then these people in the departments can clean up these roads in the certain areas and not every community needs every side of the road done but there are certain areas that need to be done. We have to be able to do that. I think it'd save the province money. I really do but we will not look at it. We don't change the way we're doing it.

I had brush cutting that was tendered out last year. Then a company has an issue. They couldn't send people there. They were going to get there in November. We're now into March and it's still not done. Still not done. It was supposed to be done last October. Now the company had an issue. I said, who are we going to get it done? Can we get someone else to do it? No, we have a tendering process. They won it but they couldn't do it in time. Now it's March. All right? Then it's coming to that time, again, that the brush cutting is going to need to be done and it's still not done.

So they are the important issues that we, as MHAs, got elected in to represent our constituents, to bring to the House of Assembly and are they important? They certainly are. They're very important and for the minister to say today that we didn't ask questions on tariffs. I think that's embarrassing on this side. Yes, no doubt. We've got to ask. It's embarrassing to say that they're not important.

The Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, he brought up about the equipment. This is the kind of stuff that people see through, and it's disappointing.

You do a photo-op in January, about 64 pieces, and we get seven delivered. Okay, they knew they ordered them two years ago. It was after COVID when they were ordered. But don't come out and promise them to the people when they're not there. That's all we're saying. Why do you go do that and they're not showing up? I mean, that's what really irks people. They see through it so much it's unbelievable.

We should be not at that stuff. We should have the equipment here. If you're going to do a tender again on equipment, why wouldn't you have the tender be finished in August and the equipment come in here in August? Whatever time the date is going to be announced, have the equipment come here in August, the equipment be ready for September, October, to go in for snow clearing.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: If you can get it – but you're in charge of the tender dates. You order them.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, don't come out in January and say you've got 64 pieces when you only got seven. That's the point. That's the exact point.

P. FORSEY: Facts matter.

L. O'DRISCOLL: So the facts matter and it's the numbers is right.

Anyway, Chair, thank you so much. I'll certainly get another chance.

CHAIR (Trimper): Thank you very much.

I now recognize the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker – Chair, my apologies. I don't wish to mislabel anybody today.

Not having moved in the circles of oligarchs, as some of my colleagues have, I don't think I've got quite the same level of interesting, personal stories to tell. It is actually pleasant, however, to listen to the Minister of Finance. She has, because she was wound up, done what she's been very reluctant to do, which is to blow her own trumpet. If you talked to the bond-rating agencies and go back over the last six years and see what has happened with the financial situation of this province, it's really down to some very hard work from her and her team, and I would like to give her the credit for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: It's a really interesting contrast to take that with the Newfoundland-is-broken speeches that we're hearing from the other side. It's really quite interesting that that mimics the federal dialogue, albeit somewhat tardily. It's also interesting that as they're starting with the Newfoundland-is-broken speech, the author of the Canada-is-broken speech has suddenly gone dead quiet, because that's not the right message at this time. It really is not, because we have a significant threat.

What has essentially happened today is war has been declared on a neighbour. It is an economic war, it is a tariff war, and the reason for all the comments that are generated over there about, well, you didn't do this, you didn't plan for that, is one word, and that is chaos. That man is an agent of chaos. Chaos, you can go back to the Greek etymology of it, basically it means appearances of as if at random. Random, by definition, is not something that you can plan for. It is an occurrence out of the blue.

So you can have a list of contingencies as to what you might think might happen, but even that might be inaccurate. In terms of what you are going to do with, as our Premier said, a maniac like that, all you can essentially do is be aware of what he says and respond sensibly and calmly to what he does.

It is still not yet immediately clear that those tariffs have actually landed. And until they do, we cannot assume that that is the case. And because they are random and because you have no way of doing anything other than drawing up a list of contingencies, I would argue that the provision of a contingency within Interim Supply itself is sensible.

And whilst under other circumstances, I'm quite happy with the idea of taking out chunks of the budget and arguing for specific line items and allocations – a process, I believe, can be called Estimates, which we do sit here and do with some detail – under these circumstances, you can't. Because you cannot, by the very definitions of the words we're using, plan for randomness. You can be aware of it, you can draw contingencies, but until it happens it may never happen. It's like Schrodinger's tariff. It's there or it's not; open the box and you find out.

So you're responding with Interim Supply as a series of contingencies. And that's what's built in. That's what Interim Supply is about. Interim Supply is about making sure our staff, our government employees and our expenses get honoured over a period of three months. Now, the last time we went into the House during COVID and asked for Interim Supply for six months, we got beaten to death by the Opposition. This was a step too far; it was too much. And I almost heard the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay arguing for a longer period than three months and no contingencies.

So whatever we do, the job of the Opposition is to beat us up for it. The fact

that they're there to oppose doesn't make them any good at it, necessarily, but it actually means that they're there.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, well, you know, one day – so under normal circumstances, under this heading of Interim Supply, I would use the opportunity to talk about what's going on within the department, what's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Okay, some order, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I should have started right off in the beginning: Let's just listen to those persons who have been identified and we'll keep our comments until it's your turn to talk.

On with the minister.

Thank you.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

There's plenty of time.

AN HON. MEMBER: What a Chair.

CHAIR: In theory – in theory.

J. HAGGIE: You have about 75 hours to burn through the budget; just keep burning, guys, because whatever you do now, you're going to do less in Estimates and you're going to do less when it comes to Concurrence. So I'm cool with that because it's fixed at 75 hours.

From my point of view, I'm not really going to use the time to talk about what's going on in my department or my district. What I'm going to do is suggest that, as the Minister of Finance suggested, now is a time when we're at war. Whilst we argue, we have to

also be united. Everybody out there has come up with a team Canada approach. We have Conservative premiers supporting federal Liberal leaders and talking for tariffs, and what is it: I'm going to turn off the electricity with a smile on my face if they come after us.

We need to do the same thing. I would argue that whilst the job of the Opposition is to oppose, there is a point at which some degree of unity is necessary. You can take this for what it's worth, with tariffs, this is an existential threat. It will damage us but we cannot knuckle under because that will damage us even more. We will cease to exist. Is that what you want?

Now, you can stretch this and move this into other areas, but I would suggest that this is one of those occasions where you do actually have to say elbows up, we're all on the same team, we've got the same jersey on. We don't agree on necessarily how we're going to get there but, at the moment, this makes sense.

What makes sense is to plan to protect the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, and this is an Interim Supply bill that will do just that. It gives us the leeway, happy to be accountable in the House, happy to talk to you but, for heaven's sake, at some point, get on board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: We now recognize the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Chair.

It's certainly good to be up here as the Member for Exploits to talk about the Interim Supply. I've listened to some great debate here this evening, no doubt about it, but we need Interim Supply. We really do. I mean, we have to pass Interim Supply and we need it for our public service so that our service continues and for other uses in our public service.

So we do need Interim Supply, and I don't think there's any question on that but this gives us a chance also to talk about our districts, talk about our governments and talk about what's happening.

My colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay in the beginning, I thought he brought up some very interesting and valid points. I really did. As for the Member for Gander talking about collaboration – sure, we should. There are lots of times we've asked for collaboration. I remember, though, being here two years ago, on Crown lands we stood up, and all we done was we brought in a PMR. That's all we did, bring in a PMR and every one of them stood up and voted it down; because they thought it was a bad idea from us.

Every time we ask a question about government – oh, that's a bad idea. We shouldn't be asking those questions; but that's our job to ask those questions and we will continue to ask those questions. As far as tariffs go? Yes, tariffs will certainly hurt both sides of the border. It will hurt us and it will hurt the other side; none of us doubts that. There are things that we have to prepare for that we should have been preparing.

Lots of time we stood here, I've stood here for six years now, talking about farming and talking about agriculture to increase our own food self-sufficiency. We might be up to 20 per cent now. We might be getting close. I don't think we're there yet. We're up to 20 per cent of food self-sufficiency, and we knew this before the tariffs came. Before tariffs were ever mentioned, we knew that we had to increase our food self-sufficiency, we rely on a boat.

We rely on other provinces, rely on other countries and we rely on a boat to get here. Half the time, especially in the wintertime and in the bad times of wind, rain and whatever conditions, the boat is not running; probably, for a week and our shelves are empty. By the time that stock gets over and

on our shelves, it's not fit to eat. We knew this; you fellows knew that.

You knew this for 10 years now. You knew that all along and we've been telling you food self-sufficiency is something we have to do. We knew this before tariffs; when did you know about tariffs? Well, 60 days ago, for sure, maybe a couple of months ago. We knew it was coming. Now what do you come out with, a buy local campaign – which I agree with, by the way. I really do. We should have been buying local all along.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: We should have been supporting local all along; we should have been doing this.

E. LOVELESS: Do you?

P. FORSEY: I support local, for the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune –

E. LOVELESS: Fortune Bay- Cape La Hune and proud of it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. FORSEY: I do support local, do you?

E. LOVELESS: Absolutely.

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. FORSEY: It's about time you did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: It's about time you did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. FORSEY: Anyway, let's get back to where we're going.

I'll get back to the buy local campaigns and the things we should have been doing for the farmers. I've had lots of calls from farmers. First of all, to get a piece of land, if

they get a piece of land, by the time they get it cultivated and get it plowed, they're up and gone. It was that expensive that they're tired of government not helping them – not doing a thing for them – they're up and gone. How are we going to increase food security like that?

Now with regard to the tariffs again, like we mentioned, we knew this all along. It's a buy local campaign and now it's break down interprovincial barriers. I haven't heard one thing from government about the interprovincial barriers and what they're going to do to break them down. Which ones are you going to break down? How are you going to break them down? We know that needs to be done but, by the time you get it done –

S. COADY: Allow me to tell you all about it.

P. FORSEY: We know it needs to be done, but how are you going to break them down? How are we going to increase our food self-security within our own local? We have to buy local, of course, and we do need to do that. That's just one thing on the farming in the province.

On red tape again, the minister gets up and talks about we have the highest this, we have the highest that, we have the highest everything – we have the highest red tape in the province, which causes people to have restrictions in farming, in land and everything to get the crops in the ground and get things growing so that we can increase our own self-sufficiency.

There are lots of things we can do, lots of things we've been telling government that you should do and we've been telling them all along – long before the tariffs came along but, again, they need something to become a very huge problem before they react to anything. Oh, this is happening? What, this is happening? You knew it was going to happen.

That's one thing that I've seen in my district, especially food self-sufficiency. Another one in the district, health care and home care. People can't get home care in the district anymore. They're calling me all the time, they can't get home care. We talk about fixing our health care, people in acute-care beds staying in emergency rooms – emergency, that's another thing. Between the Grand Falls-Windsor Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, who's busting at the seams most of the time because of diversions down at the Connaigre Peninsula, Lewisporte or Buchans, Baie Verte –

AN HON. MEMBER: The Connaigre Peninsula is doing well. You haven't been out there.

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. FORSEY: – all of a sudden the emergency in Central Newfoundland Health Care Centre gets overloaded.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. FORSEY: I can see the minister from the Connaigre has a lot to say tonight. Probably he'll want to get up again.

E. LOVELESS: I am.

P. FORSEY: So he should. That's the health care system.

Then, home care, again, for seniors, to keep them in their own homes, I'm hearing that they can't get workers anymore to come to help them out. They can't get workers? How come? They can't get workers to come and help them out, sure how are we going to keep seniors in their home?

I know the chair for NL Health, he talks about care to community. How are you going take the care to community when you can't deliver it? You can't deliver it to keep

the seniors in their own homes where they feel a lot more comfortable and they're healthier. It's been a proven fact that has always been proven, but yet, you can't provide that service. You can't provide the service for community supports in those areas.

I'm sure you fellows get the calls as well. You must get the calls. You have to. It's not only us hearing that so that's why we ask questions. That's why we ask the questions that were always there, and how you fixed it. They're not fixed because we've still got the questions. We're here talking about it now so they're not fixed and it was problems that were there all along.

I mentioned to the minister yesterday about the fire equipment. We depend on our volunteer fire departments. They do great work. They really do but we depend on them. Every time they go looking for tanks, cylinders and that sort of stuff – not a big lot, but it's something that they need to do their jobs on a day-to-day basis, but every application – I showed him here yesterday – declined, declined, declined. I had four or five and I've had them here ever since January. They all came out January 13, or something like that, but those little fire departments need that equipment.

That's not the first letter, by the way. They've got this probably last year or the year before. Those are problems that were there all along. That's why we bring this up and this is why I'm proud to get up and represent the District of Exploits.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Well done.

I now call on the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Speaker.

Always a pleasure to rise in this House and represent and speak on behalf of the people of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, who has given me the privilege and the honour to do this.

I'll say to the Member for Exploits, yeah, I do buy local. The only thing I don't buy local, but it's from Canada, and that's Heinz ketchup. I can't do without my Heinz ketchup. I'll just say that, but anyways buy local. It's very important to buy local, no doubt.

Mr. Chair, we're here to talk about Interim Supply and I don't need to explain it. It has already been explained by many in terms of the importance of all of our support for Interim Supply and why need it. We need it to pay, just for instance, the medical people in this province that provide great service to all of us no matter where we live.

In just listening to all speakers, because I tried to have the opportunity to write down comments by various speakers on all sides, to talk about the finances of the province, I've been on many Committees working with the current Finance Minister. Yes, she is my colleague and I've seen her perform on many levels and I say we are in good hands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: We are in good hands in terms of our finances moving forward with this province because we all know that we have many challenges in terms of this province and the services we provide. This government is certainly responsible, and we do listen to the public. A lot of our budgetary process decisions come from listening to people within the province. It doesn't matter what political stripe. It really doesn't matter.

In terms of speaking, whenever I'm on feet, whether it's the Interim Supply or whatever you talk about, you talk about your district because that's why we're here. We can have all the ministerial responsibilities all we

want but your district is first and foremost. To talk about my district, and kind of trying to draw in the concerns for tariffs, because people in my district are very concerned about what does it all mean, and that's a big question that's being asked right now.

For me, the fishery – and I'll get to the Member for Bonavista. He made reference to the aquaculture industry, and I'll speak to that. The fishery in my district, the fishery is big with lobster and other species, but aquaculture is a very big piece of it. The aquaculture industry employs a lot of people down in my district, and without it would be devastation.

There's the supply industry. So the supply industry, I think, is more concerning with regard to the tariff threat because we don't know what that's going to mean for the supply industry and the industry as a whole. I have oil and gas workers in my district and they're all scared, and legitimately so in terms of the tariff threat because it's real. It's real in my district and it's real everywhere and people are angry.

They're angry about it, and they're angry on many levels because they don't know what it means. For them, it's uncertainty, it's insecurity. That's not just for the workers in the fishery, it's for teachers that are down there, it's for doctors that are down there, it's for nurse practitioners that are down there, it's nurses that are down there and many others.

But I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, no different than Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, whatever, want to know what their government is doing about this tariff threat. I believe, and the Opposition knows and everybody in this province knows, that the Premier has done a great job in terms of solidifying the Team Canada, Team Newfoundland and Labrador approach to the tariffs because it affects all of us – it affects all of us.

He led the charge nationally and internationally, and that leadership is important, I have to say, from all sides. No matter who the leader is and someone alluded to that, that we need to – we do what we have to do in the House of Assembly. That's part of all parliamentary procedures. It happens everywhere, but I think we're all together in terms of our team approach and that we need to have a plan for – my time is up already. I'm like, wow. All right, so I got that much left.

So I'll go to the Member for Bonavista who talked about debt and I'll just remind him in terms of debt, back in 2015-2016, when the Liberals took over from – just a little bit of history, because I noticed he likes to talk about history and all that and the people who are listening in the great District of Bonavista. Good on him.

During the PC times, oil and gas was at its peak, \$28 billion came into this province. Now, if there had been a contingency fund at that time, which would have been wise, like is being done now, it would have helped out quite a bit, moving forward. It would have. I know the Member for Bonavista would say, yes, I don't know why you didn't do it or why they didn't do it. I know he would say that, absolutely.

But he made reference in terms of – he dug up some Estimate comments. I don't know what they were in terms of – I was the minister. He didn't say the minister but I was the minister, the deputy was as well. He talked about conservation and stuff. Those were just said in Estimates that was on record but I'll put on record right now in terms of the marine conservation piece – and I've said it over and over and over because there was a pre-feasibility study to be done. You referenced the Premier making that comment and you said, wow, it was a great comment.

You could have commented, I say to the Member for Bonavista, and you could have said to the industry that I support the

Premier, but you didn't. I've never heard you say it – I've never heard you say it. Your leader visited my district not long ago. He never said it.

So I don't know what the commitment over there is, but I've said to the people in my district, very clear –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: Oh yes, I'm on record. Just go check social media because you check it a lot, I say to the Member for Terra Nova. So you want to check it. I'm on record there, very clear. It may be funny to the Member for Terra Nova but it's not funny to the people of my district because it's their livelihood. I'm there to support them 100 per cent in terms of that issue and that concern.

I know the Member for Bonavista talked about the news conferences that they attended, the risks for processors, the risk for harvesters, the federal government but he said, I asked, how? I don't know he said. You don't know. Right. So if you're going to stand on your feet, all I say to anybody across the way is provide the solution. Because if you don't know, that means you don't have the solution. So very important. Hopefully I can get to some of the other Members. There was three other Members that commented over there, but I want to go to the Member for Ferryland because I know he's sincere. We heard it in his voice tonight that he's sincere. I say to the Member for Ferryland and every Member, the health care issues, yes, we don't want to be hearing what's going on in health care. I wish we could fix every issue. It doesn't matter who's governing. The issues are real.

My sister lived in Peterborough, Ontario. She says, Elvis, you guys got a good health care system compared to ours. So it's a reality everywhere, no doubt about it. The issues that are brought up, it's not on government. I understand what they're trying to do, absolutely 100 per cent, but the

Member for Ferryland also said, I don't have the answers. No, he doesn't have the answers either, but sit down and talk about it and come up with solutions. That's being done – that's being done.

In terms of health care, the Member for Exploits talked about health care. Down in my district, there's been quite – how can I say it in terms of the issues? Because we had diversions and I'm telling you there was a lot of stories that I wish I wasn't hearing about. We were doing everything we could, because the financial packages were there for doctors. What was being offered everywhere else was being offered down there. I wanted that assurance from the government and we got it. But right now, good things are happening down in my district, 100 per cent.

So you get up and you say I'm sure the Members across gets all those emails as well, but I also get calls to say, listen, our health care system down here, while there will still be struggles, absolutely 100 per cent, no matter who's over here, it doesn't matter, but things are better down in Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. I'm proud to say that. I fought for it because it's a concern for me. I have an 85-year-old mom down there. You want to talk about no home care. That's not correct, because there are lots of seniors in my district getting really good home care. They are, because the system is working for them.

Challenges for seniors across the province, nobody is not dismissive on any side, but there are good things and it needs to be mentioned because the people don't want doom and gloom. People do not. People in the province want to know that there's a plan. On this side, there is a plan and I believe the people of the province will support it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

I call on the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Much appreciated. We just listened to the stats from the Finance Minister about everything that the government has going for them now and they sounded like some pretty impressive stats, no doubt about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: My question is this. If you have all this going for you, as a government – and this is a sincere question. If we have all these great stats and government has everything in place going for them, all the good direction going for them, why are so many people in the province suffering? Why are we in one of the worst times in my 47 years I've ever seen in this province? It must come down to the decisions that you're making, with those great stats and everything you have going for you.

So what does that say about the government we have if we're going to stand on the stats that we have and they're so great, yet we have so many people across this province suffering, like they have never suffered before? All of us can see it. Tell me why. That's a legitimate question. If everything is in the right direction and we're doing everything right, why are we in one of the worst times I've ever seen in my 47 years? Where's the connection there?

We listened to the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs stand up tonight and say tariffs are random, we don't know anything about them, you can't make a plan for a lunatic in the States, all that kind of stuff. I absolutely agree. So if what he's saying is right, why would we come in today all bullish on tariff questions on day one if there is no plan and there's no way to make a plan? He just said it. He just said it's random, we can't

have a plan right now. We just can't come up with it.

AN HON. MEMBER: We have a plan.

C. TIBBS: Then why talk about it? I can't wait to hear the plan. I can't wait because we haven't heard it yet.

Mr. Chair, they say you have a thousand problems. Every person, you get about a thousand problems – a thousand problems. But when you have a health care problem, you only have one. That's it, you only have one problem in your life at that point. We've all seen people, we've all had people pass belonged to us in the past few years and like I said, your thousand problems, that comes down to one problem then.

I have a very close relative to me that's very dear to me. A woman in my life who's extremely dear to me, 54 years old. She went for a test on September 23, 2023. She got her results back January 4, 2024. Her prognosis, ovarian cancer; 104 days after she had her test, she got her results back.

What can happen in 104 days? Cancer can grow, and it does. One hundred and four days of worry and concern. One hundred and four days, 104 opportunities every single day of catching it early, because that's the best way that we can deal with cancer. One hundred and four days later is when she got her results back – 54 years old with three children.

This woman is extremely dear to me. I spoke to her tonight and she wanted me to tell her story, and that's her story. She's still going through her chemo treatments now. I think that she got some good results today. But 104 days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Now, having said that, I must stick with my integrity, and I have to say this. I have done some great work with the Department of Health. I truly have. I cannot

stand here and say that it's all doom and gloom, because I have done some great work with the Department of Health and I thank the Department of Health for that. But 104 days for that woman to get a diagnosis is absolutely terrible.

So when we come here and you want to talk about tariffs and, don't get me wrong, extremely important, extremely important and it's going to cause a thousand problems across this country; but for that woman that's extremely important to me, tariffs don't mean squat. If you don't have your health, your mental health, your physical health, tariffs don't mean a thing.

Like my colleague from Terra Nova said today, we need to ensure that we still take care of the problems here. We need to take care of the problems here. That's something that we are going to continue to advocate for. We will not be deterred by anything that happens south of the border. They will not deter us from the problems that we have here and trying to come up with solutions for the problems that we have here, each and every one of us.

My colleague from Terra Nova, I believe, asked a question yesterday about colon cancer. Newfoundland and Labrador, highest in all Canada. Not just Canada – and I could be wrong but I think I'm right – we have some of the highest cases on the planet, in the world. So when we ask these questions, we're not asking them on behalf of us. That doesn't happen. We work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So when we come in here and ask these questions, we're asking them on behalf of the people of the province.

Yes, we can still work together and we can get all this done. I mean, we're here right now. We're here right now in the Legislature, and what have we got? We got nine weeks to ensure that the people's business is taken care of and thank God the House of Assembly is open for the next nine

weeks so we can take care of that business –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – because over the past few years, this Legislature and this government have been beaten up numerous times for having the least amount of days in the Legislature and, don't mistake it, this is where the people's business takes place.

So what a great time for the House of Assembly to be open for the next nine, 10 weeks – I'm not sure what it is – to get down to the people's business and ensure we get it done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. TIBBS: That's exactly what we're going to do here.

In Grand Falls-Windsor we have some of the most overcrowded ERs, I bet, in Canada because we have an influx from other communities. That's what we do. We take care of each other.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many (inaudible)?

C. TIBBS: Lots. Lots from down that way, but we need to ensure that we take care of the people of the province. You know, four and five ambulances – I've been down there. I go to my emergency room on a regular basis. I talk to LPNs. I talk to doctors. I talk to nurses on a very regular basis. I walk into my ER, through the doors and I talk to people. Tell me a better way to get a temperature of exactly what's going on than that.

People say, do you know what? If you guys get in government, what are you going to do different? That's number one.

We're going to talk to the men and women on the ground that are delivering this care, that are on the front lines, that need the most support and we're going to find out what they need. We're not going to speculate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: I don't need studies to tell me what my ER and my doctors and nurses need. I am there and I'll always be there, and we'll always be there for them. That's something that we're always going to do.

On a little bit of a positive note, the Lionel Kelland Hospice took in its 100th patient in January. One hundred residents throughout the Lionel Kelland Hospice delivering care to families all through Newfoundland and Labrador. We've had weddings there. We've had movies there with a mother and her children. We've had so many things going on; it's a great, great place. It took 10 years to get there, it took 10 years for the first community residential hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we are there, and I couldn't be more proud of it.

I'll take this last moment – what do I got left there?

AN HON. MEMBER: Two minutes.

C. TIBBS: Two minutes, perfect. I got two minutes left. I just want to talk about roads for one second.

Four years ago, we had two fatalities in Grand Falls - Windsor; again, a 100-kilometre stretch of divided highway with a hairpin turn – blind turn. Last month, we had somebody going the wrong direction in the 100 kilometre per hour zone.

Four years I've been asking three ministers to help me with this – not to help me, to help the people of the province. It's not just the people of Grand Falls - Windsor. How many people go through Grand Falls - Windsor? I bet you every one of you do at least

throughout the year. Nothing has been done yet and, to the minister's point, I've offered solutions. Nothing, silence and they keep telling me, we'll take it under advisement. We'll see what we're going to do.

Four years ago, we lost two individuals needlessly, is it going to happen again? I'm standing here again and I'm asking the minister, please. Let's play pretend for a second: Back the first week of February, this happened again, I have the video to prove it. If somebody had died that night, what would you have done the next day? What would be in place today, so it never happens again? Do that now.

Do that now; don't wait for that to happen again. Just picture that happening, come up with a plan, get it done, keep my residents safe and keep the people of Newfoundland and Labrador safe. That's all I'm asking. Get on it, get to work and get it done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now call on the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Chair.

It is, as always, a privilege to be able to speak on behalf of the people of St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows. I certainly thank them for the opportunity that has been afforded to me to sit here.

We're having some interesting conversation tonight and we are surely operating in unprecedented times. I feel like we've said that so many times over the last four years: global pandemic, fires, floods, economic warfare; all that we're missing now is the locusts. I've seen a meme today that said, we've been in unprecedented times and we're ready for the precedented times so send us back to those.

In all seriousness, there is a real threat before us. It will require a firm and measured approach. A stable hand on the wheel and reassurance that government has a plan. The economic threat that is posed by the tariffs coming out of the US, are probably the greatest challenge to the fishery in my district since the moratorium.

I was encouraged today to hear the Minister of Fisheries have an opportunity to discuss some of the measures that have been implemented and to speak about what it is that the government is doing to be proactive and to commit to working on expanding market reach and diversification and outlining some of the measures that this government will take to support this vital industry. I know that so many others in the room have similar issues in their districts, so the challenges are real.

But for the moment I'd just like to take this opportunity to focus on something very special in my district. The Member for Exploits reminded me of it and triggered me when he mentioned food security. I'd just like to take a moment to talk about a food security project that was initiated in St. Anthony by SABRI, a social enterprise in the district. They had taken it upon themselves, with some funding from different organizations from both levels of government, to start growing lettuce in a hydroponic unit in St. Anthony. They have had large success. You can follow some of their social media and see that every six weeks they're rotating out different types of lettuce and selling it in the local grocery stores so that we have fresh produce, produced right in our community.

Given that on Saturday it's International Women's Day, I would like to take a moment and give a shout-out to Felicia Hillier, who is the brains of the operation. She's the scientist that's running that operation and she's doing incredible work inspiring the next generation of women who want to take up science and technology careers in small rural Newfoundland and

Labrador communities. So hats off to her and the organization that has been making great strides in our community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: This conversation today is about the budget so I digress just a little bit, but I will bring it back to that. The Minister of Finance has identified that my department has a significant expenditure and if I may I'd like to share a brief snapshot of how some of those investments are important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Department of Education.

Chair, we heard it said that children are 30 per cent of our population, but they're 100 per cent of our future. So the public funds that are allocated to the department can be seen as an investment in the future of this province. These funds are required to ensure that our schools are operating, that we can support our teachers, our administrators, our staff, so they are paid for the hard work they do day in, day out.

Chair, these funds are required to ensure that we're able to continue providing safe and reliable transportation to and from school. Recently with the elimination of our 1.6-kilometre policy, we've been able to provide that support to students and we want to continue providing that resource for children.

If I might give just a little story, we do have a school here in the St. John's metro area who reported in January of 2024 that 75 per cent of its students were missing 10 per cent of days in school. So this year, in 2025, we went back and talked to the same school, and they noted that that measure has improved by 25 per cent and they are attributing that to access to reliable transportation to and from school in the winter months here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: So that is certainly a positive change that we've seen and making this resource available to our students is of the utmost importance and we want to continue having these students show up to school, getting the opportunity to engage in meaningful learning opportunities and interacting with their peers, learning and becoming contributing members of society.

We've also made significant investments in our school food program and we want to continue that good work. We recognize that empty bellies have no ears. So if we want to continue teaching our children in environments that are positive, then we want to keep them fed and engaged, and this is another important piece of that puzzle.

Chair, we have so many great things that are happening in the department, not the least of which is our child care initiatives that we've been able to embark upon and support our families here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have over 11,000 child care spaces now that are operational at \$10 a day or less and heard a recent statistic that Newfoundland and Labrador is among the top three in the labour market where women have returned to the workforce, and that has been attributed to the availability of affordable child care in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: So we've got some great things that are happening and the budget that we're about to embark upon will do more to continue to support Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. But at this stage, we are very much worried about Interim Supply and we want to make sure that those funds are available to continue this good work and make sure that our public servants are paid and that all of our programs are there and that these things are reliable for our residents and our communities.

On that note, I will take my leave because I do believe that we're just about to clue up here tonight, and I'm ready to go home to see my little boy.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report progress on Bill 105.

CHAIR: It is moved that this Committee do rise and report progress.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion 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 Lake Melville and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of Supply have directed me to report to this House of Assembly that, on Bill 105, they have made some progress and ask leave to sit again.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee has

considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

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