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*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit visitors.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on a point of privilege. I rise at my earliest opportunity following comments made both in the public domain and on social media and comments made outside this hon. House in a scrum yesterday.

Before I get into the comments made, it is my privilege as a Member of the House of Assembly and for the constituents I represent that, in Question Period, I can rise and ask questions to the responsible minister and he shall rise and answer them.

Yesterday, I asked a number of questions, which fall under the responsibility of the Minister of Health and Community Services. These questions were answered by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, who is the MHA for Gander.

I initially assumed that the Member for Windsor Lake had resigned as the Minister of Health and Community Services and, as a result of this resignation, the MHA for Gander was answering questions in the capacity of Acting Minister of Health and Community Services, in addition to this role as the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

This initially made sense to me, because yesterday morning, the MHA for Windsor Lake wrote on social media and this is a quote from his post: "... I'm stepping aside from my roles in Cabinet as well as my role as Government House Leader ...." Also, when I came into the House yesterday, the 50th General Assembly session listed the MHA for Windsor Lake as the MHA for Windsor Lake, not as a minister.

However, comments made after that in Question Period, outside of this House in a scrum, now, bring doubt into play about who is the Minister of Health and Community Services and who ought to have answered the questions in Question Period yesterday.

Yesterday, outside the scrum area, the Member for Windsor Lake said he was still a minister. When the media was hesitant as to how to address the Member for Windsor Lake, both the Premier's communications director and the Member for Windsor Lake agreed that he was still a minister. A few minutes later he said, as I take some time away to make a decision about my political future, this quote would seem to contradict the comment that he was still a minister.

After another few moments, the media asked for direct clarification from the Member for Windsor Lake, who confirmed he had not resigned as minister but he was taking leave. The communications director, while the Member for Windsor Lake was still in the room, said it was just like he was out of town.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member was not out of town. He was present in the House yesterday and so was I and I brought questions forward on behalf of my constituents and they were not answered.

So to recap, the Member says on social media, he's stepping aside, but then the scrum area he confirms he's not resigned. The Premier's communications director says that the Member is still a minister, but they are treating the situation as if he's out of town. The Member is not out of town.

In the public interest and as confusion may impede the privilege of all Members of this House, including myself, I raise this for several reasons. One, who has the legal authority over the Department of Health and Community Services currently? We all know –

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

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, I think the Member over there is taking pictures.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No, I'm reading, sorry.

**L. PARROTT:** All right.

We all know that the minister has a certain level of authority, responsibility and accountability to this House. So right now, who is it and who is the Minister of Health and Community Services today?

Two, as an MHA on this side of the House, it is my responsibility and my privilege to ask questions. If the Member for Windsor Lake is indeed the Minister of Health and Community Services, why did he not rise and answer the questions yesterday, but allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to take all questions related to all health care?

Third, the Auditor General has previously raised concerns about the protocol of Members' and ministerial expenses. So I believe that full transparency surrounding the Members' compensation is in the public interest. If the Member has not resigned as a minister, is he still collecting a minister's salary?

It is tradition for a minister to resign if they seek leadership of their party. But there remains confusion around the Member for Windsor Lake's status as a Minister of the Crown. So my purpose here is to ensure full transparency, to seek clarification and for all MHAs to know who the correct Minister of Health and Community Services is so they can advocate properly for their constituents and the people of the province.

Speaker, I ask that you review this matter and ask the Member for Windsor Lake to clarify his current status as a Minister of the Crown.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** (Inaudible) fair bit packed in there, but I'm not sure where the point of privilege is, as somebody who's sat here for 12 years in this hon. House. I'll leave that to you, Speaker, to review. It sounded like an awful lot of politics to me.

I also want to say that even though we have an assigned portfolio as Ministers of the Crown, we all sit around the same Cabinet Committee tables, we all sit around the same Cabinet table, and we're all pretty qualified to answer.

Many times that I have stood and answered on Labrador questions that may have been under Health, but I felt with Health being so large, I might've known more knowledge at that particular day. So I'm not sure what the issue is, but I'll leave it to you, Speaker.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member did pass in his point of privilege prior to us going into session this afternoon. I am going to recess for a short while to further review the point of privilege and I'll report back to the House very shortly.

The House stands in recess.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I will now rule on the point of privilege raised by the Member for Terra Nova.

In his point of privilege, the Member for Terra Nova raised concerns regarding answers to questions during Oral Questions on March 3, 2025. The Member is asserting that his privileges have been impeded based on the minister who responded to the Member's questions.

Parliamentary privilege consists of the rights, powers and immunities to protect

Parliament and ensure that its Members may fulfill their parliamentary responsibilities without interference. It is an essential and vital element to the functioning of a modern, democratic Parliament.

In ruling on this point of privilege, I must examine the effect that these matters had on the Member's ability to fulfill his parliamentary responsibilities. In accordance with Bosc and Gagnon, if, in the Speaker's view, the Member was not obstructed in the performance of his parliamentary duties and functions, then a prima facie breach of privilege cannot be found.

In Bosc and Gagnon, third edition, it states that: "A complaint on a matter of privilege must satisfy two conditions before it can be accorded precedence over the Orders of the Day. First, the Speaker must be convinced that a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been made and, second, the matter must be raised at the earliest opportunity."

In reviewing this matter, I'm satisfied that the Member for Terra Nova has raised the point of privilege in accordance with the required process.

The Member asserts that his privileges have been impeded based on who responded to the question.

Bosc and Gagnon, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Third Edition, chapter 11, states the following: "Questions, although customarily addressed to specific Ministers, are directed to the Ministry as a whole. It is the prerogative of the government to designate which Minister responds to which question, and the Speaker has no authority to compel a particular Minister to respond."

As the Member for Terra Nova has not shown how his parliamentary privilege has been affected in the execution of his parliamentary duties, nor how he has been obstructed, impeded or in any way

interfered with, in his parliamentary duties, I do not find there is a prima facie breach of privilege.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I am just going to make a couple of comments. I have been sitting here reflecting, as I've been waiting for you to come back and make your ruling, and I went back to the days of when I sat in Opposition and we would look to the gallery for the unelected minister, Judy Manning, to answer the questions. So maybe I've been here too long because I have a lot of memory of different things on all sides of the House.

I just want to say, Speaker, that on a day today, when the people of this province are so concerned with the tariffs that have been brought in and the far-reaching impacts that can have on businesses and on individuals, I'm happy that you saw through, with your supportive books and documents there, that a point of privilege was not breached.

I want to say that, over the next three weeks, as we have a lot of strong leaders on this team and the leadership race unfolds, any minister could be answering any question because the next three weeks should be interesting.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**E. JOYCE:** The Member for Terra Nova, I thought it was great point because I know with the people out in Western Newfoundland, especially Western

Memorial who can't get a bed, they want to know who they got to write, which minister. When the Member for Terra Nova stood up and said, who's going to be the minister responsible to try to help with those problems, I want to know. The people on the West Coast want to know.

So for this idea that this here is frivolous because there are tariffs that come in, there are people sick, people leaving the hospital. I want to know.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I made my ruling on it. It is not the responsibility of this House to determine who answers the questions or who asks the questions. Let's make sure it is done properly.

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

**SPEAKER:** We're going to move ahead today.

Before we start with our regular proceedings, I would like to recognize Trine Schioldan –

**B. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker –

**SPEAKER:** When I finish, please. Take your seat.

I would like to recognize Trine Schioldan, a distinguished employee of the House of Assembly Service who retired on Friday, February 28.

Trine's tenure in the public service includes more than 27 years; 21 of which were in the Legislative Library of the House of Assembly. Trine's primary role was indexing the Hansards, making her quite likely the only person in the world to have read every

word spoken in this Chamber for the last two decades.

During her tenure in the Legislature, she has proudly served approximately 160 Members, including eight Speakers and 6 premiers, and takes with her an incredible knowledge of the workings and history of this House.

I know that all hon. Members will join me in wishing Trine a healthy and happy retirement and commend her for her faithful and diligent service to this House and to the people of the province. She will be greatly missed.

Thank you, Trine.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, I'm going to call this a point of privilege, you call it a point of order, but I feel it incumbent on me, as the Opposition House Leader, to respond as you gave my colleague, the Government House Leader, the opportunity to have a couple of comments. I'm not going to be all day at this either.

One thing is if a Member don't know who the ministry is, their rights are violated. I know you made the ruling and that's fair, but I think it's important to put that on record.

Part two of that: I've been around a nice while too, Minister, and for the Government House Leader to bring back the Ms. Manning fiasco that happened in this House of Assembly, their memories are very short. But to anyone that knows me, I don't forget very much. I watched Members opposite, who proudly say they were here pre-2015, humiliate – and I mean, Speaker, absolutely humiliate – Ms. Manning on the floor of this House of Assembly.

Anyone who wants to go back, do *Hansard* checks. I don't want to go down the road of some of the stuff that happened in here. You need to do *Hansard* checks and what happened in this House of Assembly trying to belittle and destroy this lady because she was appointed in a Cabinet post.

So when the Government House Leader stands in her place and makes a comment, and I don't think it had anything to do with my colleague's point of privilege here today, it was a valid point of privilege and I do believe his privilege was violated. You made the ruling and I accept that.

Then, for my colleague for Humber - Bay of Islands to stand up and he gets cut off. This is the people's House, Speaker, and we all deserve a right to have our say.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We're moving forward with the Member statements.

### **Statements by Members**

**SPEAKER:** Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the District of Harbour Main, Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville and Mount Pearl - Southlands.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate the Town of Holyrood who, on Sunday, concluded their annual Crystal Carnival festivities.

The Holyrood Crystal Carnival began in 1990 by a volunteer committee and, this year, celebrates its 35th anniversary under the Town of Holyrood's Department of Recreation and Community Services.

The town, residents and visitors from all over the region participated in nine days of fun-filled activities for people of all ages. Activities like the 5K Chilly Dash road race, which had 95 participants this year; the Crystal Cup Dart Tournament; and everyone's favourite, the Chili Cook-Off and Outdoor Play Day. For the kids, there were paint nights and for the seniors, the popular Carnival Scuff, during which I even managed to get a scuff or two myself, is always a huge hit.

The town partnered with volunteer groups, including the Holyrood Fire Department Volunteer Auxiliary, Holyrood Trail Association, Star of the Sea Association, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 64 and Central Avalon Ground Search and Rescue. These are the hard-working volunteers who put so much time into the Crystal Carnival being an enormous success year after year.

Please join me in congratulating the Town of Holyrood on yet another successful Crystal Carnival.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** St. James All Grade is classified as a small school, but the Trappers girls volleyball plays with a big heart. The Trappers this year won gold at VolleyWest Female B Tier 1. They won gold regional A girls provincial qualifier. They won gold provincial A girls in December. They won gold and went undefeated in under 18 female provincial championships.

Under the leadership of their coach and mentor, Suzanne Gilbert, assisted by Sara Gilbert and Brad Gallant, athletes Alley Childs, Paige Childs, Anna Smith, Alexa Whyatt, Kendall Jones, Ava Gallant, Keegan Park, Claire Barnes, Cassidy Travers, Bella Sheppard, Oceans Park, Sofia Bazylewicz and Lindsey Sheppard

proved that hard work and determination and a huge heart will bring you success.

The female volleyball Trappers have inspired so many young athletes to participate in sports and work hard, especially young girls. These young athletes brought pride and joy to the towns of York Harbour and Lark Harbour, and we're all proud of them for their successful year. The school spirit was contagious, and the support from the teachers and the students was unmatched.

I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the great accomplishments of the St. James All Grade female volleyball team and their coaches. Proud of you, ladies.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise today to talk about CRRS TV. It's a community-owned telecom provider committed to Labrador West residents by providing high quality, affordable service while reinvesting profits back into the community. As a cooperative, CRRS TV operates with the goal of prioritizing the needs and interests of its members over profit maximization, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among its users while providing an essential service to Labrador West.

Beyond the core services, CRRS TV actively supports local initiatives from educational programs, youth sports and charitable events through a reinvestment of its earnings. By prioritizing local, it contributes to the growth of the community, its well-being, members have a direct voice in decision-making processes, ensuring that the organization remains focused on the needs of Labrador West. In 2024 alone, CRRS TV put \$208,665.63 back into the

community in donations and in-kind services.

CRRS TV's dedication to its social responsibility and sustainable growth makes it a model for community service providers. Its stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, showing that when telecom services are owned by the people, they serve they benefit far beyond just connectivity, they create stronger resilient communities.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating CRRS TV as they move into their first purpose-built building later this year.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**P. TRIMPER:** Speaker, last year you will recall I recognized the professionalism exhibited in Lake Melville and across Labrador when out of control forest fires forced community evacuations. One of these events occurred on the 19th of June when over 750 people in Churchill Falls were safely evacuated as a wildfire rapidly approached their community. Six days later even the remaining essential workers were forced to leave.

Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro implemented well-prepared emergency planning to ensure the safety of everyone, as well as the security of this massive electricity system.

Then, just two weeks after the evacuation was lifted, Churchill Falls hosted evacuated neighbours from Labrador City as a result of a forest fire threatening that community.

Last week, I was honoured to join the Churchill Falls team in Ottawa as they received the Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award in the category of Resilient Communities.

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

**P. TRIMPER:** Awarded by Public Safety Canada for exceptional service and achievement in emergency management, this national recognition is for deserving individuals and organizations working at all levels of government in an emergency management capacity in Canada.

Congratulations to the general manager, Cyril Penton, who accepted the beautiful medallion on behalf of his team and his community.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**P. LANE:** From February 6-16 the 42nd annual Frosty Festival brought Mount Pearl to life. There were beautiful lights around the city and an array of activities offered at various venues designed to entertain and warm the hearts of visitors young and old.

As one of the largest winter festivals in Atlantic Canada, Frosty doesn't just happen. It is the constant dedication of a great network of volunteers and organizers that makes this event a highlight for the City of Mount Pearl every year.

This year's Frosty Festival was packed with live music, outdoor family fun, crafting, food, sports and so much more. Frosty brought people of all ages and walks of life together to celebrate winter fellowship with one another in our city.

I would like to extend thanks to all of those who contributed to the success of the festival: The board of directors, committee members, community groups, entertainers, sponsors and the hundreds of volunteers who dedicated countless hours to making sure all of the events were successful. Their passion and enthusiasm add sparkle and energy to our city each winter.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking and congratulating the 42nd annual Mount Pearl Frosty Festival on its tremendous success.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**P. PIKE:** Speaker, I rise today to recognize March as National Social Work Month.

This month we celebrate the significant contribution of social workers in our province. The focus of this year's National Social Work Month is Social Work is Everywhere, which highlights the profound impact social workers have on all facets of our society.

Speaker, social workers in our province work in diverse areas of practice: across government departments, community agencies and health care. They go above and beyond every day to provide compassionate care, advocate for those in need, empower individuals and families to overcome challenges and support their safety and well-being. The work of social workers is incredibly valuable, challenging and complex.

In my own department, I witness the passion and commitment of our social workers, social worker assistants and the teams who work with them. These dedicated professionals support the needs of children, youth, families, seniors, persons with disabilities and individuals and families with low income.

I encourage hon. Members to join me in celebrating National Social Work Month.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We, the Official Opposition, would like to extend a massive thank you to our province's social workers.

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

**C. PARDY:** Their diverse skill sets are essential to bettering the lives of countless residents within Newfoundland and Labrador. It is challenging to discuss the amazing contributions of social workers and the glaring issues they face while working in the field.

Most recent numbers available show that resignations are outpacing retirements and this is not a new issue. This is particularly seen in the failure to retain our new graduates. There are clear concerns surrounding workload and other challenges complicating the matter. These are outlined in both media and government-sponsored reports and are far from new issues, yet they persist.

While we celebrate National Social Worker Month and the profound positive impact they have on our communities, we encourage government to finally meaningfully act to better the working conditions these heroes work in.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the social workers of Newfoundland and Labrador. For this National Social Worker Month, we call upon government to

take a stronger action in eliminating the long list of social worker vacancies in CSSD.

They could start by making social work a more enticing field to study. First of all, ensuring that social work students are paid for their work terms. Also, please work with the university to reverse program cuts and bring back off-site supervision for work terms of social workers. These things can help entice and bring social workers into our province.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has defended his sketchy land deals by saying there were independent appraisals done that guided his decisions. I find that quite interesting.

The government press release and photo op announcing the Kenmount Crossing land deal was on November 4, 2024. Yesterday, the minister tabled an appraisal dated November 27, 2024. The Liberal government's own documents show that the appraisal was done 23 days after the sale was announced.

So I ask the minister: Will he now admit that he bought the land without an independent appraisal done or is the information that he tabled yesterday wrong? Which one is it?

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

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

Notwithstanding how politically important that might be to the Opposition, what's really important to the people of this province is the fact that we now have tariffs by the United States.

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

**S. COADY:** It is difficult to understand why the United States is imposing tariffs on our country and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** I'm hearing from the Opposition they don't like my response to this question. You can ask it again, but I will say this is what's important to the people of this province.

We have tariffs. We fought beside the United States in conflicts, in 9/11 we were shoulder to shoulder, but I will say, this province will be strong, strategic, smart, calm and precise in our response. We're removing products from the shelves at NLC. We are looking at procurement. We are doing more trade missions. We are doing Buy NL.

Mr. Speaker, elbows up.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, it is extremely important that the province look at its procurement because clearly what they are procuring from their Liberal friends has the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador upset.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Procurement without tendering: The minister wrote a blank cheque for land and then asked how much it was worth. He basically waited for the

cheque to clear and then did the paperwork to back up his decision.

Why did the minister use taxpayers' dollars to buy this land without having an independent appraisal done?

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

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

This is a bit of Groundhog Day answering TI or TW questions, but I thank the Member opposite for the question.

I will, obviously just being in this role or alternating in this role for a very short period of time, endeavour to get more information on that for the Member opposite. But the reality is, it's my understanding that the appraisal was done before there was any land purchased, but I will certainly get that information for the Member opposite.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for his response but, in fact, the information that I'm going on was the information that was tabled here in the House yesterday by the minister.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Here's another fun fact about that appraisal: The appraisal only covers 10 acres of the 54 acres that were purchased.

Speaker, I ask, can the minister table the appraisal on the rest of the land, and why was only a small portion of the land appraised?

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again, I thank the hon. Member for the question.

As I said in my previous answer, I will certainly endeavour to get him that information as quickly as possible. I do think, from what I have been told in my short period of time doing the alternate job here, is that appraisal informed the purchase price.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, again, the actual appraisal was actually done by the company, not by government, and it was only done on the 10 acres that they donated. So again, there are questions around that whole piece of why we haven't actually seen an appraisal for the remaining acreage.

We were also led to believe that the land on Snow's Lane was of no use or held very little value. But again the appraisal the minister tabled yesterday said – these are documents that the government has given us, and it's not adding up. It notes on several occasions the property – quote – could be developed with access and suitable municipal services. This includes the possibility of developing residential housing.

With our housing crisis, why did the government give away land that had development potential?

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

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

Again, I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, there was an independent appraisal done on that land. I think actually one that was initiated in 2018 and there was some interest that was added to the purchase price of that property. But again,

as my colleague said yesterday, this was a process that happened and we're quite willing to open that up if the Member opposite would like.

I intend to speak with the Auditor General and see if there's something here that she would like to look, because we have confidence that the process was followed.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, again, allow me to quote from the appraisal report that was provided to us yesterday by the minister. I'll quote from this report on Snow's Lane: "If suitable access could be gained to the portion of the land zoned R1, and if municipal services could be extended to service the R1 lands, then the property may be worth developing with a low density residential subdivision."

Speaker, the minister's own report sees the value and opportunity of this land. Why doesn't the minister see it?

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

**S. CROCKER:** Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question.

There were a number of ifs in there and, obviously, mayes. But the reality is the appraisal was done on land that was based on the fact that it had no access. So that is the basis that the appraisal was done.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, again, quoting from the appraisal on Snow's Lane, it says: "... the highest and best use would be for speculative long term holding for future residential ...."

Speaker, the appraisal did not recommend a fire sale.

Why did the minister have one? Who benefited from the sale of this land? Because it certainly wasn't the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

Again, I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, and I think my colleague said quite clearly yesterday, there is a process here. We will initiate and we will ask the Auditor General to review the sale of this land.

Let's remember the process of this land started in, I think, August of 2023. There was a negotiation period from August of 2023 until late December of 2024. So, Mr. Speaker, we're more than willing to have that process looked at.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, while the Liberal government is fast and loose with taxpayers' money and land for Liberal friends, the volunteer fire department in Boyd's Cove, Boyd's Harbour is not so lucky. Their artesian well was damaged by the Department of Transportation and Works, and they are still fighting to get it fixed. That was back on August 1, 2023.

What they've been offered was an insurance company to come out and look at the value of it. The insurance company – the actual cost was \$18,000 – the insurance company offered them \$10,000 and then told them that if they wanted to get the rest they should consider going out and selling

cold plates or burgers to make up the difference and I have a letter here that says that.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that this Department of Transportation and Works will fully pay for all the repairs that are necessary to fix this artesian well?

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

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

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

Again, I thank the hon. Member for the question. I will certainly look into that immediately, Mr. Speaker, and get back to the hon. Member.

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

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

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

Probably you should throw in a couple of acres of land with it, as well. That might save themselves so many turkey teas.

Speaker, the Mobile Crisis Response Teams were established in 2018 to help people experiencing mental health crisis. To quote the minister at the time, it's important to ensure access to these services wherever people live in the province. However, a recent ATIPP request revealed that the Mobile Crisis Response Team in St. John's has 10 missed mobile calls a month, which means 10 people aren't getting the help they need when they need it. This is by the month.

Why is the minister putting lives at risk?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to answer the question.

The Mobile Crisis Response Team is an important part of front-line resources. The Member opposite raises a very interesting point. I do not have the figures in front of me for that. I will certainly look into it and get back to him with the answer.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, these missed mobiles involved individuals in mental health distress, and we hear it every day as MHAs. Yet the government routinely fails to respond because there's no mobile crisis response teams available. Either they are out on another call or it's after hours.

Speaker, this would never be acceptable if this was 911 – ever be acceptable if it was 911. Why is it acceptable for mental health crisis line to be dealt that way; with 911 it wouldn't be acceptable.

Why is this acceptable for mental health people looking for help here and now? Why is it acceptable, Speaker?

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

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

I would take exception to the comment that the Mobile Crisis Response Team does not exist – is not available. It has been expanded to multiple sites. My recollection currently is that there are at least five, if not seven. Some of these are staffed during the day and some of these are staffed 24-7. They are trained officers in use of force, and they are social workers and people with mental health and addictions experience. They are available.

There are other fill-ins for those occasions where there is not a Mobile Crisis Response Team or there isn't one allocated for that night – there are alternatives. There is 911,

there is the Mental Health Crisis Line and a variety of other interventions.

I would personally like to see this as a 24-7 service across the province; we'll get there.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the question is why are there 10 calls being missed a month? That's the question. Can I have an answer for that, Minister? Why are there 10 calls being missed a month?

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

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

As I say, I do not have the data to hand. I will look into that, as I have said in my first answer, and get back to the Member Opposite. From the point of view of other services, I would point out that 911 and paramedics are also trained in mental health first aid, as well as physical illness.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Ten missed calls a month could end up in 10 tragedies, that's what matters, and people in mental health are suffering. I hear it every day and I think all the Members in this House hear it every day. Obviously, 911 is not picking up the slack.

Speaker, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions was quoted, July 25, 2024: "One day, you know, one week, one month waiting for somebody who's in a mental health crisis, it's only going to cause more trauma for those individuals, and we got to

make sure we can address their needs in an as immediate fashion as possible.”

While the minister may believe this is devoid of substance, devoid of facts, can he explain why he’s failing 10 people every month?

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

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

Whilst Mental Health and Addictions is a somewhat separate portfolio now, thanks to the Premier’s acknowledgement that this required a portfolio with a sole and singular focus on mental health and addictions, it is fair to say that there are multiple alternatives and low-barrier access to mental health and addictions services.

Indeed if you look back to COVID, we had the Doorways project which was deemed an emergency service and now expanded to over 86 individual locations and is even available in schools. It is a low barrier, easy entry into the mental health system where they get treatment the minute they walk through the door.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, that’s cold comfort to the constituents in my district who call me literally in tears, looking for help, looking for assistance in mental health issues. They’re in crisis. That’s cold comfort. Those numbers mean nothing to those people I talk to week after week and we all do.

People in crisis cannot wait for the Liberals to act. In the 2024 budget, the Liberals announced new mobile mental health crisis response teams. A year later, the Liberals have not fulfilled the promise for the Burin, Clarenville or Conception Bay North areas.

Why have the Liberals turned their backs on the residents of rural Newfoundland who are suffering mental health emergencies?

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

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

The Mobile Crisis Response Teams rely on collaboration from law enforcement. They are the people who are trained in appropriate use of force and are there to ensure the safety of both the individual who’s calling as well as the mental health professional who is responding to them.

We have worked diligently with JPS and through them with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and we acknowledge that there have been challenges with staffing in all of those areas. We are working to deal with those and as I said yesterday, our recruitment and retention efforts are yielding dividends. We’re not there yet but we’re working to get there.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Minister, why has the Justice Department failed to implement effective measures to prevent repeat offences, allowing the same individuals to cycle through the system repeatedly?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we’ve said many times in this House of Assembly, the Justice system and the continuum of justice is very complex. There are a lot of reasons why individuals commit those crimes and go back in to do that same way of life. We’re working very diligently as

a complete government, as a whole of government approach, to help both the addictions, the mental health areas that would be coming forward for those individuals as well as through the Justice system.

We've made fantastic investments. We know there's more to be done. We've put in some \$20 million earlier in the fall of this past year and after that we put in another \$24 million in the Justice system as well, to help with Crown attorneys and other areas like that.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:**

Unfortunately, Speaker, he did not answer the question, and I only point to the Auditor General's report who spoke herself about the deficiencies of the criminal justice system and looked at issues that may have increased risk to public safety.

So, again, I ask the Minister of Justice: How does he justify the lack of accountability in the justice system when we hear of daily reports of individuals being arrested for crimes they previously committed?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. It's a very important one.

Anything we can do to limit the amount of recidivism in our province for those individuals that have very strong, complex needs – we're working very diligently in this department to make those changes to help with therapy and help with programming within those facilities that we have across our province.

We are not there by any stretch to say we're complete and finished. We're working very hard to make it better for those individuals so that when they are incarcerated in any of

our facilities, they'll come out better individuals.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Again, Speaker, nothing specifically has been noted by the minister to address the issue of recidivism.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Are you concerned that the degree of recidivism in our court system both undermines the confidence in our criminal justice system and also imposes greater risk to the public at large?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I completely understand why individuals in the province are concerned about public safety. Obviously, crimes in this community, like across the country, are more complex and the severity of these crimes are becoming more and more prevalent throughout all communities, not just here.

We have significant investments in the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, as well as the RCMP; some \$95 million with the RCMP and some \$75 million with the RNC each and every year. We're making advancements to form joint task forces to help those individuals that are committing crimes in our communities to be brought to justice.

We don't control the *Criminal Code* of Canada. We're working very closely with our federal colleagues to find ways that we can do additional opportunities for individuals to receive that programming that's required to help them transition back into society to be good, upstanding citizens.

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

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

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

Speaker, incidents of school violence continue to play out in our schools on a daily basis. The NLTA has published troubling stats that show violence and physical acts are up 30 per cent. A recent access to information request has identified dozens of vacancies in schools around the province. Speaker, the province is short about six educational psychologists.

I ask: What is the minister's plan to address this shortfall and when?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

We do recognize that there is a troubling trend of increased violence in our schools and we are working very closely with all stakeholders who have something to add to that conversation. We realize that this is not an issue that one particular discipline is going to solve. It is a very complex issue and we realize that our classrooms are often a reflection of our society and the place in which we find ourselves in society today is often troubling.

But we have a committed team of stakeholders who are sitting around a table to make great strides in what we can do to change the environments in our classrooms and, consequently, change the environments for our students and our teachers. But it is going to take an approach of many people around the table and not just one particular discipline.

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

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

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

Glad to know that they're sitting around a table to try and figure this out.

Speaker, teachers and parents are looking for leadership and action. The minister boasts about adding teacher learning assistants, reducing the student-to-counsellor ratio. We see that reduced and it's not even to the recommended levels.

Just recently, a student was arrested at Macdonald Drive Junior High with a weapon.

What specific action has the minister taken to improve safety in our classrooms since this most recent incident?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker.

As I said, we do recognize that there is a troubling trend of increased violence in our schools. And the Member opposite referenced a pilot program that we initiated which sees our student services teaching and learning assistants on the front lines in our classroom and in our schools. They have the opportunity to intervene in situations that may potentially turn into violent situations, or if it's simply addressing a student who may have a particular challenge on that day.

We've seen great improvement in the environments in the classrooms and in the school systems that have these teaching and learning assistants in place. And we'll continue to do that. We've actually doubled the number that we've made available.

But, Speaker, as I said before, this is a very complex issue and we're certainly not interested in turning our school systems into jails or implementing metal detectors in our front doors. We want our students to feel safe and supported in our school system and we have to work towards a multi-prong solution (inaudible).

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

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

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you.

From all the complaints and parents and grandparents reaching out to me, the schools are not safe. They are not safe.

While the minister has spent two years – yes, two years – on an ill-conceived curriculum change for middle school students, students, teachers and parents continue to cry out on the increasing violence in our schools, year over year.

Just recently I spoke to a grandmother and a mother about their child, a 12-year-old who will not go to school. Who, on Valentine's Day, wrote the Valentine's with suicide notes in it. That was just recent.

So why do we continue to see these situations? What urgency has government placed on this desperate state?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond, again.

I will identify that this is a very complex issue and the issues that the Member opposite references is not something that we can expect a teacher, a school or a Department of Education, alone, to fix. It is a multipronged approach that is going to take the collaboration of everybody. It's going to take schools. It's going to take communities. It's going to take parents, students, teachers and all disciplines alike to come to a conclusion and a solution that provides these measures for our classrooms.

Most recently, we've had a discussion with our partners who sit on the School Safety Coalition. We've heard great stories from some of the schools around the province who have made incredible strides in increasing their school safety and we're

going to continue to build on that good work as we move forward but, again, I call on everybody who has a part to play here –

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

**K. HOWELL:** – to make this solution.

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

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

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

After two announcements and flashy photo ops, the minister's promise of 64 new highway plows has been exposed as nothing more than seven. Meanwhile, depots across the province, including in New-Wes-Valley, are still struggling with breakdowns and failing equipment.

Why did the minister deliberately mislead the people of this province?

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

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

It's terrible that the Member opposite would get up and asks a question in that manner, Mr. Speaker. You know, this is a very important day for this province as we stand united against this economic situation we find ourselves in.

But to the Member's –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I see the Member for Torngat talking about safety. I drive those roads. My kids are on those roads. My family are on those roads. Safety on those roads is as important to me. No one person in this House has a monopoly on safety on our roads, Mr. Speaker.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Not one person in this House has a monopoly on safety. Mr. Speaker, we're all on those roads. It's a five-year plan. Equipment is being delivered. As anybody would know, there are challenges around any procurement today. That equipment is coming with an unprecedented investment from this government in highways equipment.

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

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

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

Speaker, with 25 per cent tariffs and housing prices continues to grow, with many struggling to find or afford housing, I ask the Minister of Finance: Will this government double the first-time homebuyer's incentives so that home ownership is more possible now during these fiscal uncertain times?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It's hard to hear the question.

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

All I can say for us here in this House is this is a very serious, important issue. We're going to remain very calm, very focused, very strategic, very precise. We're doing everything from changes to procurement to trade missions to Buy from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Specifically to the Member's point about housing, as the Member is well aware, this government has made record investments in housing, including a five-point plan. We'll continue to look at what we can possibly do as we move forward towards budget.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Speaker, with the rising cost of living now and the 25 per cent tariffs, people are feeling anxious and don't know how their government is ready to protect them. Electricity bills are rising all over the province and we saw the positive outcomes of the HST holiday.

I ask the minister: Will she remove the provincial HST from all forms of home heating to help keep more money in people's pockets during this unprecedented time?

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

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

It certainly is unprecedented times and I'm glad the Member opposite is asking important questions on what we are planning to do about tariffs.

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

**S. COADY:** These are very serious times that we're in in Newfoundland and Labrador, across Canada.

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

**S. COADY:** I can hear chirping from the other side, Speaker. They clearly don't take that as seriously as we do on this side of the House.

I will say to the Member opposite, he would have heard yesterday and he will see introduced into this House, legislation to continue the low gas tax. It's the lowest gas tax in Canada. We've reduced by 50 per cent the cost of registering your vehicle. We're eliminated the tax, for example, Speaker, on home insurance.

These are just some of the \$750 million worth of supports that we've provided to Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

Speaker, we must be strong in our response to the United States president and his unelected oligarch buddies.

I ask the minister: Will this government remove the provincial electric vehicle rebate purchases on all Tesla-branded vehicles and will the government do incentives to purchase only Canadian-made EVs?

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

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I think he was reading my emails today actually. I did check today, specifically on Tesla, and because there's no dealership here in the province – thankfully the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, in its electronic vehicle rebate, had a stipulation that you had to have a dealership here in the province and Tesla does not have a dealership here in this province. There have been some rebates on used Teslas that we are looking at as well.

So I think you are absolutely correct. It is elbows up, so you can expect us to do that because we are looking at all procurement to remove the United States as best we can.

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

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

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

It's wonderful that the government continues to meet with unions and industry leaders to find solutions to tariffs, but we can't forget community and not-for-profit groups who are helping everyday people.

I ask the minister: Will this government also consult with not-for-profit groups and the most vulnerable in this province to make sure that they keep money in people's pockets and secure them in these unprecedented times?

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

**S. COADY:** I certainly appreciate this line of questioning, Speaker. I think they are very important questions.

The Member opposite is right. We have convened communities –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** – business leaders and union leaders are all coming together in a round table with the Premier, with me, with other ministers. Speaker, this is very important dialogue.

As you also know, I have been in discussions with communities around this province on the budget. We're going to continue to do what we can to support those that are impacted by these tariffs. You will see, for example, there is \$200 million in contingency that we're going to debate for Interim Supply, and the reason for that \$200 million in contingency is so that we are prepared and ready to act as required.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### **Notices of Motion**

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

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

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

not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 on Thursday, March 6, 2025.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

I move seconded by –

**SPEAKER:** No, it's a little early. We are on Notices. Let's finishes Notices first.

**L. DEMPSTER:** That's right. I'm ahead of myself. Sorry.

**SPEAKER:** It's okay.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

**Petitions**

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS there have not been any improvements in the Wi-Fi and cell services throughout the District of Placentia West - Bellevue for 10 years.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to formulate a plan to improve Wi-Fi and cell service issues throughout the District of Placentia West - Bellevue affecting fire and emergency services, tourism, business, medical services and personal use that does not meet today's standards and expectations.

There's been money in a couple of different federal fundings that come to the province about improving Wi-Fi and cell service. I mean, we're really not living in the day and age of what we should be able to experience.

I have a buddy that went and met up with his ship out of Belgium and he went got a Wi-Fi card just to have it while he was on the boat. He got 200 megabits, I think, it was and it cost him \$10. We get like 75 megabits in our package and it's not unlimited or anything like that and we're paying over \$100 for it. So I don't think that we're aligned with the rest of the world in what it costs to actually provide Wi-Fi and cell service.

While there is an up-front cost and there is a sunken cost to getting this, the thing is, is that as long as we maintain it, we'll be able to do much more, including attract business so that we can improve the economy for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The biggest one too is, as part of the Greene report, we looked at offering the most outreached parts of our province an opportunity to do online medical appointments. The issue with that is that most of the places that we're talking about trying to reach, they don't have Wi-Fi and cell service. Like down in Boat Harbour, I have a lady that tells me that if she wants to see a picture of her kids, she has to go over in the window of her house and have it pointed a certain way in order just to download the picture.

Again, I think that we're so far behind the times and we're putting the cart before the

horse. Wi-Fi and cell service needs to be fixed and I think that's the thing, is that we need to understand that this is an essential tool in today's day and age.

So like I said, for the people who signed this one for me, they're from English Harbour East. They were promised a while ago that they were going to get a new cell coverage because they were coming in to do coverage for the buoys that were out in the harbour to make sure that their weather stations.

But then it didn't go far enough that it connected the residential people. They're still having to do, you know, different modems and stuff like that. What I'm asking is that the province look at it so that we can improve fire and emergency services, tourism, business and medical services.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

Happy to respond to this and the Member brings up a topic which is evergreen in nature. Certainly, we've been asking questions about cell service and Wi-Fi. It's been an issue a long time and, in fact, I do think we've seen a regression.

A couple of points I will make. The last point the Member made about the promise for cell service, I literally have no idea about that promise. So you might want to give me the specifics because that's news to me.

The second thing, though, I do think we have to keep in mind is that cell service and Wi-Fi is not an issue that is solely of provincial jurisdiction. I would encourage all of us because, I've got these issues in my district, as well, we need to continue to bring the issue to a couple of places here. One being the federal government, which is operating under the CRTC, they have jurisdiction.

The Member makes the comment, and I get it, saying we need to fix this. I can tell you now, the fix to get what some of our constituents want runs into the hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars when we talk about getting cellular coverage everywhere in this province, including along the TCH, you name it.

I don't know if you're going to see that. Again, any Member in this House can say, well, if I was in government I'm going to do that. No, you're not. Nobody is going to do that right now –

**E. JOYCE:** (Inaudible.)

**A. PARSONS:** Especially the Member for Bay of Islands.

What I would say is this: I agree that it's an issue. We are going to see some additions, hopefully in the near future as we're working on it. The other issue I was going to mention is the providers. The fact is they are in many ways holding us hostage. We continue to pay the bills. We continue to pay the increases in cost. We are not getting the increases in service.

So I think, again, I'm open to suggestions on how we deal with them. I'm open to suggestions on how we deal with any of these providers. I will point out that it's certainly not just a Newfoundland and Labrador issue: it is country wide. But I agree with you, and I share the frustration of the Member.

Thank you.

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

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

Speaker, approximately 100,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador live with mental illness. Only about 40 per cent of the people affected by mental illness and addictions seek help. Seventy per cent of mental illness is developed during childhood and adolescence, most go undiagnosed and less than 20 per cent receive appropriate

treatment. Emergency short-term care isn't enough, and it is essential that more long-term treatment options are readily available.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide access to long-term mental health care that ensures continuity of care, beginning with psychiatric and neuropsychological assessments being accessible to the public so they can access proper mental health treatment and supports on a regular and continuous basis.

I noted this the other day, Kristi Allan, who we're all very familiar with, who was the advocate for mental health, who was always out in front of our building every Monday, has done 222 weeks that she's been out there advocating for better mental health.

I also note, she had the opportunity to tour the new mental health facility. It's from all accounts a lovely building, but we all know that bricks and mortar will not solve this issue alone. We need programs and staff that can help provide that continuity of care for those who need it.

I think about the Association of Psychologists in Newfoundland and Labrador, they've spoken on this, and they said, although there is quick and early access, there is nothing there that provides intensive, long-term, evidence-based therapies needed by many, and typically that's provided by psychologists. They go on to say that access to ongoing and long-term treatment and specialized services have not improved.

I've used this quote before in the House many times from a document I read, research that was done, from an individual with lived experiences and that is: mental health and addiction issues don't do well on wait-lists. So I do hope that as we move forward, there are more efforts put into providing that continuity of care and that long-term support for the many, many, many people in this province who need it.

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

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

I rise today to present a petition on anti-temporary replacement worker legislation. These are the reasons for this petition:

Anti-temporary replacement worker laws have existed in Quebec since 1978, in British Columbia since 1993 and the federal government has committed to introduce such legislation by the end of 2023.

The use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community, the local economy and the well-being of its residents.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has been shown to reduce the length and divisiveness of labour disputes, helps to subsidize the power imbalance between workers and employer and the use of temporary replacement workers undermines that right.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout.

This is a petition that comes from Labrador West, many, many times and some here in St. John's as well, about the use of temporary replacement workers. We know temporary replacement workers. We know that the right to bargain and the right to strike is enshrined in the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is a right that we have but now we have also seen that the federal government has taken up this and has banned the temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout and once again they get in line with the rest of provinces and some of our provincial colleagues.

Once again, I'm asking that this government bring forward legislation to ban this practice and to get in line with the rest of the provinces and the country. We do it and

we've been asking for this for many years. I know I've talked to some of the unions and stuff like this that this has been an issue that they've been fighting for a long, long time and once again I bring this petition on behalf of the residents of Labrador West who also want to join the cause and to make sure that this is something that's brought forward to this House.

I know we have a new minister that is now in that portfolio. I know the former minister of the portfolio, I brought up this petition to him many times, so once again, Speaker, we want to see this kind of legislation brought this House and hopefully in a short period of time.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour for a response.

**L. DEMPSTER:** I'll do a quick response, Speaker, because I know this is a topic that is very important to the Member and his party, and he has asked a couple of questions in the House. It is a very complex matter where we have employees and employers holding very different views, Speaker. It is important as a government that we strike that right balance. I know that the Member has heard me say that before. Currently such legislation exists only in Quebec and BC and to a limited capacity we have some federally regulated workplaces.

I want to thank the Member for continuing to bring it forward. It is something that we continue to look at but it's very complex. If it had been an easy solution, it may have been done in more than the two jurisdictions that have it right now.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

The Holter monitors at Bonavista hospital, that's a small wearable device which

provides residents and patients with a record of the heart's rhythm if the traditional ECG, electrocardiogram, does not provide enough details about the heart's condition. It's a wonderful diagnostic tool. The monitor then has to be transported, once used by the patient, or couriered to G.B. Cross to have the data downloaded, resulting in time delays, scheduling and additional cost.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide a cost analysis of having the software downloaded at Bonavista hospital and electronically sent, at no cost, to G.B. Cross in Clarenville to have it read.

I presented a petition a short time ago where this particular government downgraded the lab services at Bonavista hospital. Now, they have the realization that by downgrading the lab services at Bonavista, it's costing the taxpayers more money. It didn't work out as they planned. That previous petition asked them to restore the lab services in Bonavista. Not only do patients have to travel back the following day to get their bloodwork returned in some cases, adding additional expenses, but the courier from Bonavista to Clarenville on a continuous basis is costing more money.

The Holter monitor is a wonderful attribute of which now, I think, we have adequate supply but in order to ship it, someone has got to handle it. They got a courier to ship it to Clarenville. The technician, I guess, with the software, will download the reading from the resident's trial and wait for a specialist to read it.

We realize on the Bonavista Peninsula that you're money in if you invest in the software and the machine at Bonavista hospital, send that electronic reading from the Holter monitor – no couriers, no labour involved with it – to the specialist at G.B. Cross for a reading – money in.

When I say that, sometimes we don't stand to offer suggestions where operational deficiencies within the system are

addressed to save taxpayers money. I'm not asking for more money to be spent. It is an inconvenience. It's a problem scheduling. This is something that can save the taxpayers money.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The breakwater on the lower coast in Trepassey is in urgent need of repair. This breakwater is necessary to protect the one and only access road to the lower coast.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to complete the necessary repairs and install a more durable and sustainable breakwater.

So I got up to do this petition today, again. This happened last February. We met with the minister in October and they said they were going to go up and do a temporary repair, fix it. It hasn't been down as of yet.

A quick fix, I would think, would be armour stone on the front to break the water. That'd be the first start. And then they start to build the cribbage or whatever is needed, based on the engineers from the government that the minister has said yesterday.

But for the Minister of Finance to get up today and say our questions from the District of Fogo - Cape Freels are not important is not acceptable. We're acting on behalf of our constituents to be able to represent them and the issues they have.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Every question you had before, the answer was it's COVID's fault. Now it's going to be tariffs in their answers

for all day to day. It's time to give us some answers in here. And we're tired of being put off in the last 10 years and it's time for them to do something about it. Because we're sick and tired of the answers.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Residents on Route 350, 351 and 352 in the Exploits District are concerned about road conditions on those routes causing safety issues and damages to vehicles.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately have roadwork to upgrade and improve conditions of these routes.

Speaker, I've brought this petition to the House many, many times. I've talked to five different ministers regarding these routes. Every year, I've talked to the ministers and they tell me to put it into the five-year roads plan. Every time we get a new minister, it's always on the five-year roads plan. So that is on the five-year roads plan for the past five years. We've been here for that long with different ministers and I'm not getting any work done, especially on Route 350.

Right now the roads down there on Route 350, part of that road is getting deplorable to drive on. That's our main arteries for hospitals, main arteries for work-wise, main arteries for all the traffic throughout the Exploits District. There are parts and pieces on that road that need very important attention.

I've put it in again for this year and I'm hoping the minister will look at this year and have some of those upgrades done. Now I've talked to five different ministers and I know they're all over there looking and listening, so I'm hoping that one of them will get up and answer me.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

**Orders of the Day**

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7, Bill 105, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the Deputy Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 106 and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

**SPEAKER:** I think the minister did say 105.

**L. DEMPSTER:** I did say 105.

**SPEAKER:** 105 is Interim Supply.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6 –

**SPEAKER:** No, we will go back to Motion 4, please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Go back to Motion 4?

**SPEAKER:** Yes, so we have it correct on the record

**L. DEMPSTER:** It's 106.

**SPEAKER:** It is Bill 106.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker. I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

I move seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Okay.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Sorry, I had it right, Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, the last time. Thank you for keeping me straight – for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7, Bill 106, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the Deputy Government House Leader have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 7, Bill 106, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7," carried. (Bill 106)

**CLERK (Hawley George):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7. (Bill 106)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 106 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that under Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4, 2025.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, March 5, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 4.

Speaker, I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 102, which is in progress from yesterday's proceedings, and that is seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 102.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### **Committee of the Whole**

**CHAIR (Trimper):** Order, please!

We are continuing our work on An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Law Enforcement Oversight Commission and the Complaints Process Relating to Law Enforcement Officers, Bill 102.

A bill, "An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Law Enforcement Oversight Commission and the Complaints Process Relating to Law Enforcement Officers." (Bill 102)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Clause 1.

I recognize the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

I listened intently there yesterday when a lot of questions, a lot of answers – and I understand where this bill is coming from, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Law Enforcement Oversight Commission and the Complaints Process Relating to Law Enforcement Officers. When I read that heading and see what it's about; this bill is about safety. There's no doubt about it. It's about safety. It's also about trust and it's also about confidence in our legal professions and, in this particular situation, our RNC.

This is in no way to say we don't have a very capable law enforcement agency here in the province. I know a lot of them and I know, on the most part, they do a fantastic job. They do a job that is everchanging and more complicated than what it would have been 20 or 25 years ago. I also understand, as we know with some of the crimes that are being committed, they are becoming much more complex.

But I think when we look at the RNC, there are public perceptions out there – not many, but there are – that they're not performing in the professional manner they should be. Again, I say this is the exception rather than the rule, because there are so many out there who do their job quite well.

When I was flipping through this bill and listening to the comments yesterday, I noted that there's a section there, Part V, that speaks to Reconsideration and Appeal and it is, I think, about four or five pages. This has to be there; there's no doubt about it. It

gives the opportunity and, for lack of a better word, the accused – I'll call the person the accused in this – he or she has quite a process there that they can go through if they feel that the decision made is not what they felt it should be.

So they have lots of opportunities to go through that appeal and, again, I don't argue with that. When you're dealing with situations like this, when you're dealing with complaints brought forward to a law enforcement officer, it has big ramifications, especially for his or her job and his or her characteristics and that, personality and the whole works.

When I look at this, there's all this process there that allows for the accused to get due diligence. I got nothing against due diligence but when I flip back – and the minister did answer this yesterday, to an extent. I still want to just take it on a little bit longer.

When you go page 13, section 14(8), and then there are a number of smaller issues there – but I look at 14(8)(a) and it's just three simple words there. In this case, I'll call the person the victim, for lack of a better word, or the complainant. So the complainant goes through this process and puts in an appeal or puts in a complaint and then, at some point in time, the chief shall review the report. That's reviewed, and do one of the following, and there's a list. But the first one there is: dismiss the complaint.

When I look at that and I compare it to the extensive piece on Reconsideration and Appeal, I say well, what recourse does the complainant have in this particular case? And I don't want to put words in the minister's mouth, but I believe he said yesterday, in response to another question, that they could seek legal action. I believe that's what he said, but he can confirm that.

So my question is: Is it simply that? If the complaint is dismissed, for whatever reason, what recourse does the complainant have?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wasn't sure if you were finished, sorry about that.

**CHAIR:** I wasn't either.

Thank you

**B. DAVIS:** I just thought there was a long pause.

I think you went through, very clearly, what I had said yesterday. One of the things I said, the recourse, I think there are two sections that have been a little confused there. But I'm glad you asked the question.

So if someone does not agree with the commissioner's ruling, then they have the ability to go through the court process if they do that. If they do not agree with the chief's processes, I think that's what you – if it's gone from the commissioner direct to the chief because it's an HR matter and then they go through to dismiss a complaint – I'll double-check to make sure what my understanding of it is, but there's always an opportunity if they're not happy with that, to at least reach back to the commissioner to ask for an opportunity to look at it again. But I'll double-check to make sure with our staff that are listening to this. It's a very valid question.

When someone makes a complaint to the commissioner, there's always the option that it could either go to the commissioner to review or to the chief to review, or it could be dismissed and not be a complaint at all that would warrant any looking into.

It could be a nefarious type of complaint, something that has no foundation or anything like that. There could be an option for that to happen but hopefully I've answered it a little bit more. I know there's some more detail you're looking for and I've got some staff who are going to come back to me with some more information on that.

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, for that.

My concern is that someone who goes through the process, and it's not an easy process when you put forward a complaint, and it may be related to a coworker. So to go through that process and put in that complaint is not easy.

If that should be dismissed, then I think, the expectation is that there would be other means in which to further that away from that first opinion, we'll say, so to speak.

This is an important piece of legislation. I can't push that or say enough about that. From the enforcement officers out there, a lot comes down to training and standards that they need. You know, when people put a complaint in, we have to make sure that the officers we have out there have received all the training they need to deal with the complex issues that are being faced on a daily basis.

As I said earlier, it's a complex world now. I actually think back to a time when myself and the minister, I was deputy mayor at Paradise and we were out to Fire Ops 101, which was out – we all were put through our changes with multiple different exercises with the fire department. One of those was a mock rescue of an individual who had overdosed. As an individual we were to help address that situation, how would we talk the mother down in this particular situation from a child who had an overdose? It's a very learning situation because not everyone is equipped to do that and that could lead to a complaint, that an officer did not do the right thing simply because he or she did not have the proper training.

And I know you have the answer to my previous question, but, I guess, my next question is: What assurances are there going to be that officers are properly trained for, I guess, the new reality of the world we're in because there are much more complex situations?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll address the previous question first.

The commissioner, as I've said, they break out separately as I've said. Right?

So if there's a public interest or a victim as you've described or a complainant if it's of public nature, then that would not go to the chief. It's an internal HR matter would go to the chief, so they deal with that. So the dismissal of that, what recourse would be, I guess it wouldn't be involving the general public just to elaborate on that part.

I don't want people that are watching, the many people from the great District of Bonavista that are watching here today, I don't want them to think that the RNC or the RCMP are not well trained because I think that's not what you're trying to say. You want to make sure they have the best training: so do we and so do they.

So there is a significant amount of training that they do on a regular basis. They receive the state-of-the-art training at the time when they're becoming police officers, but they do receive training throughout their time as police officers.

Can we do more? Obviously. There's always an opportunity to improve professional development should be first and foremost for all of us and that is no different for police services than it would be in the House of Assembly. We have to make sure that they have the best equipment, the best technology, the best trained police force because the criminals and the society is changing and becoming more complex.

I fully agree with you that training is if paramount importance. It's not what this bill is dealing with directly and I can understand how important it is to tie training to this bill. This is one bill. There will be other bills that will follow that will create greater oversight, viewpoints, fairness to the process. We

want to make sure. But that's what this bill is about: fairness, openness, transparency for the discipline process for the RNC and law enforcement.

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you for that.

No, I just want to clarify as well. I think we have a fabulous well-trained police force. I just want to ensure that if there is a complaint down the road or something that comes forward that's a complaint, hopefully it's not a complaint based on the fact that we did not have our force trained properly. I know, look, they go through a lot of training. I know they're well equipped but as we know, in this changing world, it's hard to keep up. I don't want them to be – and I'll say this, you know I don't mean anything by it other than to say – I don't want them to be set up for failure because it's such an important role they play.

With that, I'm done.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

Chair, I just want to speak for a few minutes now. I think yesterday I asked the minister a question about the types of complaints that would go to this police complaints commission. Particularly I asked about the whole concept of response times by the RNC. I want to take an opportunity to talk about that, because it is relevant, because it is something that could go to the police complaints commission if people have concerns about response times.

I can say with certainty, certainly from my district and I'm sure other Members can probably say the same, that there's a major concern from people I hear from in Mount Pearl and I hear from people in the Goulds,

I hear from people in St. John's, Torbay, CBS, Paradise, but I know in Mount Pearl as well, around response times. It's not a reflection on the officers. I think, it's important to say that. It is not a reflection on the officers. It's not a reflection on their training or their professionalism or anything else but no doubt they could be the brunt of complaints that could go to this complaints commission, because of the response or lack thereof.

Now, I have brought this up, certainly there was a whole issue came to light in Mount Pearl, as we know, involving some youth that did some pretty horrible things and that brought the whole issue of community safety up in Mount Pearl. There was a town hall and so on and a lot of concerns were raised about policing in general. I think the big concern is that there's certainly a feeling that there's not enough police. I've asked about that in this House of Assembly and the minister, to his credit, he answered the question and he talked about we've invested – I can't remember the number, so many million dollars or whatever it is in new policing initiatives. He talked about policing initiatives, I think, in Labrador and all this kind of stuff. And I've heard the chief of police – I mean he's not going to come out publicly and say we don't have enough police. He's not going to do that, and he hasn't.

You'll hear sometimes he will come out and say we're satisfied that we can respond based on the population and the matrix and so on, but the reality of it is – and nobody can convince me otherwise, certainly from an anecdotal point of view – that the police response is just not there like it used to be – it's just not there. If you talk to officers in the field that you know, they will tell you.

Where we appear to be to, unless it's like a Priority 1 call – and, of course, there's a little formula you go through to determine what's a Priority 1, Priority 2, Priority 3, Priority 4, based on life safety, whether it's in progress, all those types of things. In other words, if somebody is literally getting assaulted, beat up and it's in progress, that's a Priority 1, because someone's

health is at risk and it's happening; it's live. Versus somebody punched me in the mouth two hours ago and I got a fat lip, but I'm no longer in danger. That's not the same priority as someone that's beating somebody up now, as an example. Or an armed robbery is obviously going to be a higher priority than some kids drinking beer out in the field or whatever the case might be.

There really seems to be a situation where unless it's a Priority 1, unless it's that life-and-death emergency, that urgency of something in progress involving physical bodily harm to somebody or whatever, generally speaking, you're not getting anyone to show up until maybe three or four hours, five or six hours. I think they'll even say, in some cases, it's 24 to 48 hours.

Somebody says I came home; my house was broken into. Is the suspect in your house? I don't think so. I think they're gone. Now that's not a Priority 1 because you're not in danger. They could be waiting 24 to 48 hours before the police show up. In a lot of cases now, we're at a point where you call for something and a lot of people would say this whole concept of investigating things is out the door. It's like I'll give you a file number so you can report it to your insurance company. It's all about report it for your insurance.

I had a gentleman approach me on the street the other day who had an incident. I think it was someone broke into his vehicle. At the end of the day, he had said, look, I didn't see who did it, but someone seen such-and-such and you can find out who that person is because such-and-such knows such-and-such who works over here. And they said, here's a file number for your insurance.

He went and did his own investigation, on his own time, and very quickly found out who the suspect was on his own. And I'm not blaming the police officer; they're just up to their necks – they're just up to their necks. And, of course, they're only getting a slap on the wrists in any case, unless you murdered somebody. Other than that,

they're all just getting a slap on the wrist and they're walking back out the door. It's a joke, what's happening.

So response times is a major issue for the public. It's a major issue for the public. Despite what we might hear from senior officials in the RNC, I believe it is an issue. Officers have told me this. I've been told, to have the proper response, to have that proper police presence, we need probably another four to six units on the road 24-7 here on the Northeast Avalon.

Because you have to remember, the St. John's metro area goes right out to CBS, Torbay, all those areas, Goulds, goes right out to Bay Bulls Big Pond out there and so on. It's broken up in 12 or 13 areas or something. There's a car in each area and then the van is downtown.

But, at any given time, these officers still have to do investigations. So they're on the road but they're not really on the road, some of them, because they have to go do investigations. So now they're not there to respond to a call because they're off the road doing investigations, doing paperwork. Someone gets hauled off for impaired driving, you have the officer who arrested them and then you have the breathalyzer technician is another officer, probably. Now there are two cars off the road for two or three hours and that district's not being covered.

Of course, people have to eat and have their lunch and everything else. So anyone who thinks that we have all these police cars going around, it's not happening. When we're talking about having police that people say I'd like to have the comfort of knowing there's a patrol car going through my neighbourhood, in an ideal world, on any given night, if there's a police officer assigned to Mount Pearl, he or she should be able to patrol every single street in Mount Pearl, some point during that night, to drive down the street to make sure there are no skeets hanging around, trying to cause trouble.

But I bet you that's not happening because they just don't have the resources to do it. That's where we get into these complaints about response times because we don't have the resources.

So I just wanted to take this opportunity, because it is related to this bill, it is relevant, because complaints about response times are part of this, to just point out the fact that I think we need more police on the roads, more boots on the ground.

I will get people sometimes, I guess, cynically and so on, will make the point – whether you agree or disagree, everyone has their own opinion, but some people make the point to me and say, my God, I called for the police and I can't get a response because they don't have enough officers out patrolling. Yet, here's a police officer or two down on horses, down there when the cruise ships and coming in. Then they're put on board a trailer and going to Corner Brook for the Corner Brook days or whatever it is and so on, so then it's an allegation of resources, people talk about.

I have nothing against the horses or whatever, don't get me wrong, but I'm just saying that these are things that people point out when they are in dire need and they're calling the police and nobody is responding, because those resources are simply not there on the street.

I would suggest that this commissioner, based on what I hear from people, in my district at least, this commissioner is going to be pretty busy if people get wind of the fact that if you're not satisfied with response times, call the commissioner's office. I'd say he's going to have to hire another secretary, or she is, to answer the phone for all the people that are going to have concerns about response times.

I know they're going to get it from my district. I've attended neighbourhood watch meetings and that was the whole thing – they had to start a neighbourhood watch and they said, what is the point of even starting one? We all get together and report

something suspicious and nobody shows up. That's the concern. Anyway, I'm out of time for now, but I'll pass it on.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now call on the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate it and it's always an honour to speak in this House on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

I am glad that this Bill 102, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Law Enforcement Oversight Commission and the Complaints Process Relating to Law Enforcement Officers – I agree with that and it's twofold. First of all, before I start actually, we have some RNC officers – our Sergeant-at-Arms is a former RNC officer and I'd just like to say thank you for your service.

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

**J. DWYER:** Recently, one thing that I agree with in our society is to support our police services and our forces. In my district, we deal with the RCMP. We just got a new building in Marystown that services the Burin Peninsula. Just in speaking with the officers, they're quite impressed because there's no sharing of resources, like desks or meeting rooms or any thing like that. The incarceration area is a little bit bigger; they have a better area for doing fingerprints and all that kind of stuff so that people that are apprehended are not crossing over each other and stuff like that.

It is very important. It was nice to be able to support it. It was nice to be there for the launch. But again, we can have all the bricks and mortar and cars and officers and everybody that we want, if they don't have the proper training for the different situations

then we're setting them up for disaster, to be quite honest. Because their life is on the line if a situation is not handled properly. And to my point, that it's not of any fault of their own. If the training's available, I'm sure they'd avail of it.

So again, when it comes to having a commissioner or a complaints department or anything like that, it is two-fold in that we want the general public to be protected from any wrongdoing, but we also want our officers to be protected from any wrongdoing as well.

Like I said, those training supports, I think, are paramount, they're important. But again, these can't be ivory tower decisions, they need to be listening to the boots on the ground and what makes our officers feel safe is what we should be proceeding to do.

When it comes to a unilateral decision, by anybody, when it comes to law enforcement, I think it's a really slippery slope to start travelling. Because once you make some unilateral decisions, we have to know what they're based on or if there's a protocol for coming up with that answer or anything like that.

But with that being said, it's to keep peace in our society, it's to help us feel protected in our communities. I mean, I'm the father of a child with autism. Just to think that years ago we didn't even lock our doors. I remember that being a big event for our family one time, that we're going to have to start locking the doors. We couldn't believe it. We actually made fun of our parents for even bringing it up. But again, society has changed where there are other actors kind of thing that make it bad on everybody. So we all lock our doors now, but as the father of a child with autism, it just kind of makes you really be reluctant as to what the world is going to offer to this very kind and innocent little boy, which he's getting bigger all the time. He's a big 13-year-old now.

It goes to question about the safety in our schools and stuff like that. If we're doing jurisdictional scans and stuff, we see in other jurisdictions that our police officers are

also securing our schools. Again, the response times, as the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was discussing, are very critical in that kind of a situation because it can either be escalated by the wrong people adjudicating it or it can be de-escalated by the right people adjudicating it.

If our officers are trained and we have this training for our social workers in the schools and stuff like that, it becomes a team approach. The thing is, when it comes to complaints, we want to make sure that our officers are protected and they're not being compromised in any situation. I'm not totally against the body cams. I think if the officers feel comfortable and they feel that that's protected, I think it's a good investment; because as we know, anybody that's on camera probably would act a little bit differently than they would if they're out on a Friday night with their buddies, type of thing, trying to be a smart aleck or something.

With all that being said, our communities feel a little less safe everyday because of the lack of supports in the community. As people before me have alluded to, we're almost relying now on a neighbourhood watch or residential vigilance in order to help the police force because of the lack of resources. It is the boots on the ground that are asking for it.

We do have these aging communities, especially in rural Newfoundland, that we want our seniors that have paved the way for us to be even just sitting in this House with the freedom and the peaceful tranquility that we get to enjoy in a province like Newfoundland and Labrador and the country of Canada. It's because of our police forces that we get to enjoy that as well, and our soldiers that fought for that freedom.

So to me it's that, if we have these aging communities, then we need to be listening to those people and what would make them feel safe. We can't have a rural area like Bonavista to Whitbourne being covered by four officers in a 24-hour period, it's just not feasible. Especially if they've got to go and write reports and all that kind of stuff. It just

doesn't give them the opportunity to do the policing that they were trained to do. It's like anything with quality assurance, you have to keep building on the training that you already have so that there's an opportunity to improve the overall minutiae of the story and the supports that somebody is calling about, that the right people are called out.

Like I said before, I have a son with autism, so if somebody was called to an emergency that my son was involved in, I'd like that officer to be able to know how to handle somebody with autism. Now, he's not an aggressive kid or anything like that but if he got spooked, he's liable to wander off or he's liable to go away or whatever but if there was an officer that was there and was trained and recognized that, then it might make his world a little bit safer in that situation.

So like I said, as parents we've got to give them enough rope to get out there and be independent but also, as parents, it's our job to protect them and we rely on our RNC and our RCMP officers to assist us as parents to protect our families.

It's a whole fulsome approach that we have to look at and we don't put it on any one entity in our society. What we would hope by having a board of commission, I think, would probably be more effective but with all that being said, I think is the fact that we have to make sure that our RCMP and our RNC officers feel comfortable going into the community and taking on those challenges of very different scenarios many times.

The other thing that I want to touch on in my short little bit of time that I have left is the amount of supports that are for people that end up getting incarcerated. If we're not going to help with the rehabilitation then putting them back out on the streets without any rehabilitation, is really not helping. Just to have them locked up for a certain period of time because they made an offence, then we're not giving them an opportunity to not be repeat offender.

The thing for me is that I'll ask the minister if through this legislation if there's going to be

any increased supports for both the incarcerated and rural communities.

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would say it's going to take me a long time to cut through the significant amount of information that was just provided to me, in a 10-minute intro, to a question that was, am I going to put funding in to make sure we support inmates?

That has nothing to do with this bill. If we're going to sit here and just diatribe when an important piece of legislation is here, that has nothing to do with that, that's fine, we can do that; but I'd just like to say I don't think we can speak out of both sides of our mouth to say that the RNC are a great police force and then they don't have enough training. Because I think that what we're doing is undermining the integrity of the police force.

A number of the Members on the other side have said, unequivocally, that they're a great police force, and I support them. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talked about how great the force is – excellent, we all agree there. So we all have agreed on this side and that side that training is of paramount importance.

If we're going to continue to just drag the puck, which is what I think we're doing here, if you have legitimate questions about the piece of solid legislation that we've built with community support, with stakeholder engagement, the RNC, the RNCA and all the stakeholders, First Voice, First Light, all of us have worked together to build this piece of legislation – and I'm not suggesting that this is the answer to every possible question in the criminal justice system. There are other pieces of legislation that will come forward over the next decades that are going to address the questions that are being talked about here or the statements that are being talked about here.

I understand that if this is a good piece of legislation and they don't want to talk about it, fair enough. Well, let's vote on it so we can start implementation on this stuff for the betterment of the people who we all represent in this House of Assembly.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Does the minister think that the bill goes far enough?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Asked and answered – I did answer that question. I said this is a good first step. Did I say that this is the end of the time? Absolutely not.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** As you just expressed, there's an urgency to this bill and you want it voted on right away, so can you explain to the House what the next steps are and a timeline that you're going to take to implement all the next steps after this one?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I've said, we've put in place a Policing Transformation Working Group that is looking at the police agencies right across our province, the detachments, the communities they're in, the stakeholders that are involved in those communities. Those recommendations – we've seen one report that I did release publicly, I think, that dealt with Happy Valley - Goose Bay and I think there were five recommendations that were put in place. We implemented all five of those recommendations. We're working through those.

The piece of legislation here today is about fixing a problem about openness, transparency and fairness with respect to a discipline process for the RNC. That's what this piece of legislation is. I fully agree that every training opportunity – because if that's what we're going to talk about next – will be looked at. We try to get our police force trained as best we can, understanding that they are a very well-trained force when they first come in and we got to continue to make sure that that training is top notch for the criminals that are changing and the community that's changing.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** So the minister just said that he's the minister responsible and he brings this stuff to the House and, basically, he admitted that this is just one step.

I ask the minister: Why hasn't he brought more legislative standards and changes to the House?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Stay tuned.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Admittedly, Newfoundland is unique and, obviously, this piece of legislation specifically revolves around the RNC; but in St. John's, as an example, we have military police that do some policing, and RCMP, depending on what they're investigating. We step outside and we got municipalities with police forces. I would say, again, military police, Gander, Goose Bay; and RCMP throughout the rest of the province; RNC in Corner Brook and other places on the West Coast, Labrador West and Churchill Falls.

During the consultation period, were any of these police forces consulted?

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

**B. DAVIS:** As I mentioned earlier, we consulted the list of people that I mentioned.

I can highlight them again: the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Association, the Department of Justice and Public Safety, obviously, the Department of Health and Community Services, First Voice.

I think there are a couple of more that we would have consulted but, as I said before, there will be more consultations as the regulations are being developed with those stakeholders as well as others. If we were to look at the law enforcement act expanding over time, based on what we could potentially do as has been done in other jurisdictions, we will look at those stakeholders as well.

A very good question, thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** On the surface, we see what appears to be a difference in health care in rural Newfoundland and urban Newfoundland and, admittedly, the RNC specifically operates in some of our more populated areas: RCMP and others, municipal police and military police in other areas.

Does this bill protect the rights of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who don't reside on the Avalon Peninsula or come under the RNC? Because I would think that as a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, whether I lived in Goose Bay, on the Coast of Labrador, Labrador West, St. John's or Clarenville area, I'd want to know that the same rights apply to me as it does to anyone else who's had interference through police or have interfered with police.

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Another good question.

We have two police forces in this province, and you've highlighted some other agencies that provide some services to different areas and/or populations. The RCMP has their own national process that they would go through. They were looked at and consulted in the development of this as well, to look at their process to make sure ours aligned, given the differences of the two police forces.

To answer your question very succinctly is the RCMP has their own process and now, when this passes in the House of Assembly at some point, then the RNC will have an open, transparent and fair process.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** So, again, yesterday the minister admitted that there are situations throughout the province where there are joint task forces were, obviously, RCMP and RNC may work together. In an instance like that where there's an issue with public safety or an occurrence of something that the RNC may have done, who would take precedent? Would it be the RCMP's process or the RNC's?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said yesterday, the joint task force, the composition would be of both RNC and RCMP. So if the complaint is of a nature with respect to the RNC officers, it would go through this process. If it's with the RCMP, it would go through the RCMP process, and it depends on the officer, quite honestly.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Would it be safe to assume if there is an incident regarding public safety where both an RCMP and an RNC officer

are involved, that it's possible that both could receive a different discipline?

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

**B. DAVIS:** I don't want to suppose what would happen in that case but I guess it is possible that there would be two – one would be a process through the RCMP and one would be a process through the RNC. But yes, that is correct. It could be possible.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The province also has sheriff's officers, to my knowledge. So what if there was a complaint received about a sheriff's officer? Would they come under this legislation?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Not at this point.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** What about complaints about non-uniformed members of the RNC? Civilians who work for the force or even work on administrative matters.

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

**B. DAVIS:** I'll double-check that with our staff, but my thoughts are, no, they would be a law enforcement officer and not a support person within the RNC. But a very good question, thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Obviously we have issues that extend, that require this kind of oversight into the prison. We have armed guards transport money around the province who have weapons, who have the ability to violate a person's rights or act

inappropriately. Is there any oversight going to be applied to them?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Oversight that exists for those agencies now would still exist. It's not taken into account with this piece of legislation. I'm not saying that we're not moving in the direction over time but that's not where it's to today.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** I would say a little different, but I spent some time in the military and actually did some work with the military police. I have a nephew who's an RCMP officer and lots of friends who are RNC, and we all know the challenges they face on a daily basis. To be frank, they put their lives on the line and sometimes are led to act in self defence or sometimes inappropriately for reasons unbeknownst to us.

There's a huge education part of that. I know it was discussed and you answered and my colleague from Harbour Main asked some brilliant questions, and she got some credible answers but, I think at the end of the day a lot of it doesn't go far enough. We've just seen an announcement where government is lowering the standards to enter the RNC. They just came out and said that a few weeks ago.

So in that process, is there any goal to increase the level of education, the annual training, their ability to have the tools in the toolbox that they require in order to operate in a proper way?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety for an answer.

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't know about lowering the requirements. It opens up the door for more individuals that may not have a university degree or a university process. I wouldn't say that lowers the standard. I think, it

opens up the door for people who may have a significant amount of experience in the community, that may have other experience that can be taken into account.

But rest assured when a person wants to become an RNC officer, we want to encourage people in the province to look at that. They go through a vigorous training process in PEI currently, with APA, that has all the national standards that would be required for the most up-to-date technology, the most use of force, all the training. I had the pleasure of seeing the facility and meeting the graduates and the individuals going through that process. It is a fantastic process. Very well done and run and it's a credit to the people that get through that.

We want to make sure every person that wants to become a police officer and has the right temperament, the right training and the right heart for it. Because you said it earlier, the MHA for Terra Nova, and it was true. The individual that is a police officer puts their lives on the line every day. They're sometimes running into an area when we're running in the exact opposite direction. We want to say thank you to them. We want to ensure they have the best equipment, the best training and the best support we can provide. That's what we're doing as a collective House of Assembly with budget supports that we've voted for in the past.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that the Committee rise and report progress on Bill 102.

**CHAIR:** It has been moved and seconded that this Committee 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.'

Carried.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

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

The Committee of the Whole has considered the matters to them deferred and have directed me to indicate on Bill 102 we have made progress and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report that Bill 102 have made progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee ask 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 Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I've received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

**SPEAKER:** All rise.

The following message is from the Lieutenant Governor:

As Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request of appropriate sums required for the public service of the province for the year ending 31 March 2026, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: \_\_\_\_\_

Her Honour, Joan Marie J. Aylward,  
Lieutenant Governor

Please be seated.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member of the House of Assembly for Waterford Valley, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply and I do now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh):** Order, please!

We are now considering 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.

### Resolution

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

*“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.”*

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I appreciate the recognition. I believe this is my seventh Interim Supply. I know it's definitely my sixth.

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

**S. COADY:** I'm starting to think I'm going for the record here.

We're, today, introducing the Interim Supply bill. For those listening, the Interim Supply bill is required to be passed in the House of Assembly to continue ongoing operations – very important – for the period from April 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025, while budget 2025 and the associated main Supply bill is being introduced, debated and approved by this Legislature.

The total allocation is \$3,949,634,900. This legislation will need to be passed by the House of Assembly and receive Royal Assent by the Lieutenant Governor by March 21, 2025, in order to meet payroll, income support and other expenditures effective April 1, 2025.

Of course, we don't want to get to that date and cause our officials any cause for anxiety. They would like to have this before then, and I'm sure this House will accommodate. We normally spend about six hours debating this because it does come from the 75-hour allocation for this type of debate.

The Interim Supply bill represents approximately 36 per cent of the 2024-2025 budgeted Current and Capital Account gross expenditures and it is based on allocations approved during *Budget 2024*, which received Royal Assent in May of 2024, so it's based on last year's budget.

Government operations include payroll, income support and other expenditure obligations such as calling and awarding of tenders. That's very important, the calling and awarding of tenders, so we don't lose precious time, as well as annual contractual obligations that must be incurred pursuant to the *Financial Administration Act*.

Similar to the approach taken in other provinces, Interim Supply also includes a contingency. This year, it will be for \$200 million, and that is because of the potential impacts due to the US tariffs. As we know in this House, the President of the United States has put in 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods and services which will have a tremendous impact in Newfoundland and Labrador. We talked about how we are responding to that, but we also may need to respond by having programs as this imposition of the 25 per cent tax starts to take hold in our communities and our economy.

So we are putting \$200 million in contingency for that very purpose. For comparison, Alberta has set aside a \$4-billion contingency allowance to mitigate the

impact of potential US tariffs and other unexpected expenses. You've seen, for example, Nova Scotia put \$200 million – very similar to what we've done. So many provinces across the country are doing these types of contingencies in case we need to move quickly and firmly to support our communities and our workers with this impact of these tariffs.

The Interim Supply bill will have – this is important – no incremental impact on the government's financial position in '25-'26, beyond what will be included in budget 2025. So it's important for the people of the province, for those Members here in this room today, that it will have no incremental impact on our financial position. It will be included in budget 2025.

As I mentioned, previously, the total allocation for the Interim Supply, April 1 to June 30, is \$3,949,634,900 – a staggering amount of money but, again, 36 per cent of our budget.

Why do we need this amount? The Interim Supply accounts for, as I said, 36 per cent of our 2024 budget. The base amount of Interim Supply is calculated on funding of seven pay periods and expenditures anticipated to be paid or due during the first three months of the fiscal year. So very standard.

It is not as simple as just dividing the dollar figure of the number of months. Departments make adjustments after original calculation to account for items that are required in the first quarter, like making sure, for example, TI has the monies that it requires in order to be able to let contracts.

Spending requirements vary and are based on what part of the year we are working with and for the type of expenditure. For example, if a department enters into a contract to spend funding, they must encumber or set aside the total value of that contract – the total value of that contract. So they would need the total amount included in Interim Supply. Interim Supply is required to provide funding for normal operations that can occur while we're debating budget.

The majority of funding, as I've noted, was for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. It comes up front because they need the funding available to enter into infrastructure contracts. Other departments need to encumber funds to allow for contractual commitments.

In this three-month period, the highest amounts – is not surprising – is health care. It's always at the highest level of our expenditure; it's not abnormal. Transportation and Infrastructure, the highest percentage of budget required in Interim Supply is for those large-scale infrastructure projects. Education, second-highest level of expenditure, next to Health.

It should be noted that Interim Supply does not have any incremental impacts, as I said, on our financial position. It is simply to advance funds that will be required under the upcoming budget. It allows government to continue normal, day-to-day operations while the budget is being debated in this House. Once the budget is approved sometime in late spring this year, the amount allocated through Interim Supply will be deducted from that amount required through the main Supply bill.

Chair, I did mention about the \$200 million that we have put in contingency this year, all due to the uncertainty of the US tariffs. We're not saying that we would spend that amount of money; we're saying it's in contingency in case it is required. And we would see that it's best for us, prudent and responsible to have that available to us so that we can move quickly should something occur.

Also, under the Consolidated Funds, we also have ex gratia and then, under Executive Council, we have the financial assistance, and both of those are for flexibility mostly due to the tariffs.

Chair, in conclusion, Interim Supply keeps our dedicated public service, our teachers, our doctors, our civil servants who deliver all of government's services, government's – they're paid and working and supporting their families, contributing to local

economies. If we did not have that Interim Supply, everything would stop.

So with that, Chair, I conclude my remarks, I'll take my place and look forward to hearing the debate and the remarks from Members opposite. I can certainly take this opportunity to speak again, should the need arise.

Thank you very much, Chair.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Thank you, Chair.

This is my first Interim Supply.

Interim Supply is a way of ensuring the bills and salaries get paid before the next budget is passed. Where we are, this is kind of treading water as it continues the policies and priorities of the past year instead of adjusting course for the new year. We can only tread water like this for so long, especially since last night the US tariffs were implemented and Canada responded today with tariffs of its own. Urgent action is needed. It is not just that we need elbows up; we need sleeves rolled up to get to work.

The clock is ticking. Many things need to happen between now and the end of June, when the funding provided by this Interim Supply bill runs out. Many things need to happen before a new budget is delivered. Will everything be finalized before the end of June? That's a good question, looking at what's happening now on the other side. However, we, on this side, will be vigilant and assertive in demanding actions for every company across Newfoundland and Labrador and for every taxpayer.

The minister highlighted \$200 million in contingency for US tariffs, that was also highlighted during the technical briefing as well. That \$200 million, we have no plan how that is going to be spent and I will highlight Interim Supply does not allow the government to make new spending commitments or introduce new programs.

Any new funding initiatives beyond normal business will require a budget vote or special votes here in the House of Assembly.

As such, we respectfully ask that that \$200 million come back as a separate bill so that it can be properly debated in this House of Assembly. I think we all recognize every Member here has an impact across each of our districts. That impact will vary across fishing, mining, forestry, oil and gas and yes, even tourism. That is why it is very important that that \$200 million that is allocated be debated so that we can get the best bang for the buck for every company in Newfoundland and Labrador, every taxpayer and prioritize it to where we feel in this House is the priority need. That must be done here as a separate vote in the House.

Why do we want that? Because of the Liberals track record on financial responsibility. Since we are debating Interim Supply and the Liberal government has come to that and asking for it, I believe it is important to talk about their fiscal track record, not just over the past year but over the past decade.

People at home should be asking, are the Liberals being responsible with my taxpayer dollars? The answer, I believe, is clearly, no. Here's why. The Fraser Institute ranks the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals last in the country on fiscal performance. Yes, last.

The Fraser Institute ranked the Newfoundland government last based on three factors: government spending, taxes and debt and deficits. They used a quantitative process, as we should be when we're looking at matters of accounting, to assess it. Newfoundland and Labrador, under this Liberal government, ranked last overall. That is not something that we should be proud of in this province. And as we've noted and as we've lobbied against, we were last in taxes and second last in deficits and debt. Better is needed and better must start now.

Now, it's not just the Fraser Institute and their report. We can even look here locally by our own Auditor General. Let's take a look at what the Auditor General has said. The Auditor General, in her report from last week, highlighted 95 management letter points. Yes, 95 outstanding across the government reporting entity for 2024, up from 91 in 2023.

What is most alarming is 28 of these management letter points remained unresolved from prior years. It is concerning that 30 per cent of identified issues have been reported to an entities board of directors or those charged with governance more than once.

"We strongly recommend" – and this is from the Auditor General – "that boards and those charged with governance should direct management to have issues, especially those issues identified over consecutive years, addressed and resolved." I believe everybody here in this House, especially this side of the House, demands the same thing.

The Auditor General is tasked with financial oversight, so ignoring her recommendations leads to fiscal management, wasted dollars and even fraud, and she even reported on some of those. Now let's look at some of the things that the Auditor General specifically highlighted.

Salary overpayments, the Auditor General wrote: "Since 2019, the balance of outstanding civil service salary overpayments has more than tripled, increasing by over 219 per cent yet the number of people on civil service payroll increased by approximately two per cent for the same period. Since 2019, the balance of teachers' salary overpayments has more than tripled, increasing by over \$317,170 (262 per cent)." She also said: "We found 404 civil service and 186 teachers' overpayments have not had any recovery action recorded as being attempted."

It is these little things that should be easy fixes across government. The number of each individual file probably aren't that big

but if you take care of the pennies, then the dollars will take care of themselves. That's where we are now. We need action across government as a whole because the game has now changed, as you've highlighted.

The Auditor General also found many situations where the Liberals did not take her advice on program delivery – we'll probably get a chance to highlight some of those from some of my colleagues over the coming speakers – from home support, to school busing, to ambulances, to child protection services and teacher allocation in schools. So why does any of this matter; it's the government budgets, you might say?

It's not just the government budget; it is taxpayer dollars. You have been entrusted to govern this province and as you come here today to ask for Interim Supply, we want to give you Interim Supply but with conditions: use taxpayer dollars wisely. Don't waste them like the Auditor General has indicated you have done in the past.

You know, every dollar that is spent by government reflects a choice, an opportunity cost. I want to highlight one of those in particular last year that really drove home that whole issue of opportunity costs: that was the \$171,000 to a UK soccer team to promote immigration. The end result was zero immigrants and less than 5 per cent of the website attention generated any attention for the province.

Now if we look at that \$171,000, that \$171,000 is an opportunity loss for that money could have been spent elsewhere in the province to address greater need. It could have helped 34 seniors with the Provincial Home Repair Program. They would have in turn spent that money locally, getting somebody to repair their homes and that would have created an economic multiplier in some of those communities. More important, what we've seen now with a number of seniors coming to, I believe, a lot of us is that it would have completely addressed the need for the shingles vaccine.

I believe, a couple of weeks ago, my hon. colleague for Exploits talked about getting local food on the shelves in Central. Yet, there are barriers to that because, again, we lead the country where we should not be, and that is red tape. That is according, again, to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This government must take addressing red tape seriously. I think now as I indicated with the tariff issue, we have to set the conditions to grow our own agriculture production. We have to set the conditions to support small business. We can do more locally, but we have to get rid of the red tape.

To sum up where we are right now, as I alluded to at the start of this, this Interim Supply bill is a treading water exercise. It's not a new budget. It gives us an opportunity to reflect on the policies and practices over the past year, and we will. But as a party, I believe we are ready to step up and provide you with some opportunities across fishing, mining, forestry, oil and gas and tourism as that \$200 million needs to come to the floor for debate. We have to find opportunities to grow both locally and with diversified trade internationally. That's why it is important for all 40 of us in this House to have a voice on that.

Interim Supply is a necessary measure. We get that. We will support that. But most importantly, we feel government has to pay attention to the conditions that we will put on it for every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It's always a pleasure to stand in my place here in this House of Assembly and, first and foremost, represent the people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. But this afternoon, obviously we're talking about

Interim Supply and how the next fiscal year is going to shape up, the economic outlook, I guess, the budget that our government will be presenting this spring. The Minister of Finance, Deputy Premier, has done a tremendous job in budgets. I think this is budget number six maybe, I think. Obviously, that's a record.

When the Member opposite who just spoke talks about holding us accountable to not wasting money, I can assure you, I've worked with this Minister of Finance now for six years in her department and she's quite the admirable steward of the taxpayers' dollars in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**S. CROCKER:** The economic uncertainty that we're going to see this year, unfortunately, is concerning. I think one of the parts of this Supply bill is the fact that we are planning for that; we are building a response; understanding that nobody right now has a crystal ball on the economics of not only Newfoundland and Labrador, not only Canada, but unfortunately the world as we've seen today and we're seeing in stock markets today around the world a level of uncertainty.

Unfortunately, that's not an uncertainty that's going to be four weeks, four months, it's going to be four years, and we have to plan for that and it's going to cause a lot of uncertainty for people.

But I'm going to talk about tourism for a minute and the effect that it's going to have on the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation when we talk about tariffs and some of the threats to different facets of the department that I'm fortunate enough to be in. Tourism is a \$1.3 billion business in Newfoundland and Labrador, employing some 20,000 people.

The level of uncertainty – and I don't think it's a department that really comes to people's minds quickly when you think about tariffs and the effects of tariffs, but it certainly does. The relationship south of the border, 14 per cent of our non-resident

visitors come from the United States of America. If you extrapolate the math on that, it's somewhere around \$150 million a year of the \$1.3 billion investment that tourism brings into our province.

In conversations that I've had, as a department, that we've had with our colleagues from across the country and Destination Canada, we talk about how to balance a domestic tourism campaign, we're still holding open a tourism campaign to our friends in the US because we're pro-Canadian, we're pro-Canadian traveller, but we are not anti-American visitor.

They're our friends to the south. Our connection with those people goes back to events most recently, I guess, or 25 years ago, the events of 9/11. We opened our arms to our American friends those days, and I can assure Americans wishing to travel to Newfoundland and Labrador, our doors are open, and we will greet you in the same way that we would've greeted you in the past because you are such an important part of our tourism industry.

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

**S. CROCKER:** I say that to people in the US: You're such an important part, we will welcome you.

But I will also take the opportunity to talk about, as a department, how now we have to respond to ways of increasing access for our Canadian travellers. We're open for business. We want to see Canadians who are refocusing their travel plans to look at Newfoundland and Labrador and put us on their list.

I think this gives us an opportunity as well to look at some of the investments we've made over the last number of years. When you think about opening up access to Europe, as we did last year with our WestJet flight and this year for the first time ever, we will have direct air access to continental Europe. Those are markets that we now need to focus on, realizing that this is not something that happens overnight and it will take time for us to build those

markets. But that's so very important to us in building our industry that is also facing a very uncertain time. As a government, we will be there for the tourism and hospitality industry.

We're seeing threats to the arts. We're seeing threats right now where there are talks of what our neighbours to the south may do to our arts industries and that's extremely, extremely unfortunate. But we're finding ourselves in a situation, I think, economically, that we've never been in before at this level, and I think it's very important for the department that I represent and the people that are employed in those industries to know that, as a government, we're going to be there to help support you through this difficult time, as we were during COVID and as we've always been, and we will certainly continue to do that.

When you think about how we're uniquely positioned as a province, 80 per cent of our tourism operators are Newfoundland-and-Labrador-owned businesses. So there's no better place in Canada, if you want to come and support a local operator, you want to support a Canadian business, a Newfoundland and Labrador business, there's no place better positioned than Newfoundland and Labrador because it's those people, the 80 per cent of our tourism businesses again are based, our small mom-and-pop operations around the province. So one thing about it, if you want to buy Canadian, when it comes to tourism, there's no place easier to buy Canadian, in my humble opinion, in tourism and hospitality, than Newfoundland and Labrador.

So there will be evolving strategies as we go forward. I think, Madam Chair – I'll get some more –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The clock keeps going out.

**T. WAKEHAM:** You have five minutes left.

**S. CROCKER:** Oh, listen, I've just got an added new time. The Leader of the

Opposition just gave me five minutes when I really only have 3½, so thank you.

We've seen affordability measures this week with the gas tax being extended again in these uncertain times. Our government has been clear. It's Canada first, Newfoundland and Labrador first, and we have to continue that approach. I can assure anybody that's involved in tourism, arts, culture, sport, as a department, we are focused on tariffs; we understand the challenges that tariffs are going to bring to us.

Madam Chair, I'll take my seat so we can – I'll get more time, I'm sure, Madam Chair.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Keep going, keep going.

**S. CROCKER:** Oh, I'm getting invited to keep going.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**S. CROCKER:** Leave? Typically when someone tells me to leave, they want me to go home. But again, I will conclude.

But building those investments, making those investments and access are so very important. I think this is a time when it comes to tourism and hospitality industries that we as a House of Assembly, we as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, have to back this industry, understand that there are strong lobby efforts needed towards the Government of Canada when it comes to accessing Marine Atlantic.

We are at a disadvantage right now, quite frankly, with access with Marine Atlantic because of our capacity issues. As a department, we'll continue to work with our airline partners about building domestic routes. As routes close, there will be opportunities and we'll look at expanding our industry throughout parts of Europe, as well as not forgetting that the United States and our friends south of the border are a very important part of our tourism and hospitality industry.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

First of all, let me say I agree with the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, TCAR. I agree with him on the important points he's making with respect to the fact that these are uncertain times. There's no doubt about that. We're in a time of turmoil when we look at what's happening to the tariff war that we now find ourselves in. We certainly are going to face financial challenges as a result of that.

But what I would like to speak about today are the uncertain times that our constituents are facing as well with respect to health care. I'm going to give you a story. I had a phone call an hour before I came into the House of Assembly today. It's probably the most difficult call that I ever received from a constituent's family about the experience that their father is involved with to this very minute.

I received a call from the daughter of a gentleman who's 85 years old. He has spent three nights in a corridor at the Health Sciences Centre. This is his fourth day. He's 85 years old. He suffers from congestive heart failure. He's also testing positive for a number of viruses, and he has spent the last four days in the corridors of the Health Sciences Centre trying to access health care.

Now, let me tell you the impact that this is having on him first, because we have to bring this to the reality of the constituents that we represent, and this is not the first time that I have heard of experiences like this, of our seniors in particular and what they are enduring in our health care system. But the daughter told me that her father is so depressed right now. He's very emotional and he's pretty much crying most of the time. He's confused and he's scared,

and he actually has not slept since Saturday.

I ask the question: Is this how we are treating our precious seniors in our province? Is this what it has come to, the state of our health care in this province? I ask the question also: After 10 years – 10 years of Liberal government – has our health care system gotten any better? I would ask each of us to look at constituents in our districts because if we're hearing this on this side of the House from our constituents, I can be pretty sure that the government Members are hearing cases like this as well.

So this is why this is important today. We have to bring this to the reality that our people that we represent are facing in our health care system today. They're trying to access health care and they're not able to do it. I could not believe when I heard this story today from the daughter. She and her family are flabbergasted that this is the state of the health care in our province. This is not acceptable. This is something that we have to make a priority; this government has to.

I question that when we look at *Budget 2024*, it was a record-high investment on health care. It totalled \$4.1 billion – \$4.1 billion has went into our health care system, close to 40 per cent of the total budget of this province. Yet, we are hearing repeatedly about cases like this very sad and tragic case of one of my constituents, but it's happening to other people in our province.

So government needs a reality check here. You need a reality check because this is happening. This is real time, as I speak. As I speak, this is happening to this poor, unfortunate man who is in a state of despair and is not getting the help that he needs.

So, of course, when I received this information, we reached out to the department and we did hear back. They're looking into it, the Department of Health. But essentially, the official told us that it's a very sad case, of course, and I believe there was

legitimate concern there, but the reason is probably because there are no available beds. Well, guess what? That's not good enough; \$4.1 billion, you should have enough beds for the seniors of our province.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Madam Chair, this is very, very concerning. We need to ensure that our seniors are taken care of, and not only our seniors, but all of the individuals who are trying to access health care. We need to ensure that there's better health care for the people in our province, and we hear from our constituents. I'm sure that the government Members are hearing – I'm confident of that. Whether they're listening is another question, because if they were, this would not be happening.

So people at home, as I'm going to just, in conclusion, reference what the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay stated – yes, people at home should be asking questions, like is this Liberal administration really being responsible with taxpayers' money, with your money? Are they? In terms of government spending, \$4.1 billion, and yet how is it improved? Where is the improvement? Show us. I cannot see that is the case when we have examples like this happening right before our very eyes today.

So on that note, I conclude my comments. I will, throughout the course of Interim Supply, have many things to say also about other important issues in our province with respect to affordability, with respect to our justice system as well and public safety, but this issue is of such concern that we need to address this immediately.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

**G. BYRNE:** Madam Chair, the greatest economic and existential threat that has faced our nation, our province and our

fishery is currently before us; it's been laid at our feet for us to grapple. Never since the moratorium of 1992 has there been a greater economic and existential threat to each and every one of us.

Our century's old ally has turned against us under Donald Trump. There's absolutely no doubt that that is what has happened. A century's old ally has decided that we are no longer useful to him. America does not, I do not believe, stand for that and stand with that. It will take a consolidated effort, a continuous effort to drive a conversation, not just here at home, but around the world and in particular the United States to generate a recognition that allies should never turn to enemy.

Last night, according to interpretative bulletins from the US Congress department and from the Canadian government, our country, our province and our fishery now faces a 25 per cent tariff on our exports into the United States. While all sectors of the economy are affected by our ally's betrayal, none more so than the fishery. As we are all aware, just over 95 per cent of all Newfoundland and Labrador snow crab last year was sold and consumed in the United States of America.

This half-billion-dollar-plus commodity, which is primarily caught, shipped and sold in just a four-month period, has been caught severely in this web and, as I have repeated to my federal colleagues and counterparts on all sides of the aisle, none more so than snow crab. I say this from the point of view that even the incredible lobster fishery and the economics that it brings to Eastern Canada, their markets have obviously been diversified in some respect for many, many years, not only within the United States but to Europe and to Asia.

Our role or our contribution, while many rightfully note that lobster is an industry or commodity, a product which is growing in volume and value here in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is true, to put this to the perspective, the Maritime region produces 250 million pounds of lobster on an annual basis. Newfoundland and

Labrador last year produced 23 million pounds. We are a little less than 10 per cent of the overall industry from an Eastern Canadian point of view.

That does not diminish its exceptional contribution that it makes, and the fact that there's potential for additional growth. But that is from the Maritimes point of view, from the Eastern Canadian provinces point of view. They're in a different situation than us in the sense that there is already market diversification with the lobster. Snow crab, however, even in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, PEI and Quebec, the vast bulk of that commodity is going exclusively into the United States.

The Maritimes Gulf crab, southern Gulf, does have a particular advantage into Japan. That particular product, its qualities, its nature is that it does have a resident market value in Japan in that it's a smaller crab. It has a more reddish tinge in its shell. So there is somewhat of a market there. We can move into that market as well, but here's what I need to inform the House. We are ready, we continue to be ready, and our partners, our industry, is very ready and continues to be ready.

The government has mobilized taxpayers' money for risk management and for preparation for what needs to be done. We're already undertaking specific projects. First, in all of Atlantic Canada, \$5.7 million for market diversification has been put forward. Companies now are developing strategies and proposals to access that, to develop access to markets not only in Europe and Asia, but Canada-wide. We still have a very strong marketplace that can offset some of the market declines in the United States.

Labour market supports and a labour market support package is being developed, with Ottawa taking the lead. I'll be meeting with the federal minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the next week or 10 days to firm up the requirement for that preparation just in case. Delegations of Newfoundland and Labrador seafood producer companies are engaging the world

and international buyers with support of Team NL from this government.

Team NL trade missions are currently scheduled for Europe, Japan, the UK, as well as Boston. The world gathers in Boston, I'll be at the Boston seafood show to work with Newfoundland and Labrador seafood companies to expand markets internationally, as well to meet with American opinion leaders: representatives of Congress; to heads of national grocery store chains. We'll be making our mark to inform, educate and just to repeat that they have a responsibility to inform the White House that Americans are the first to be hurt by their own White House's betrayal of Canada.

We are prepared to support processors, retool plants for product development through millions in industrial capital supports. For example, I mentioned just a minute ago that Japan has a particular marketplace, a market attraction. The Japanese and this is not pejorative, this is how they themselves present themselves, the Japanese and Asians eat with their eyes. There's an allure, the product itself as it sits on the table must be presented in a particular form. It has value in a particular form and so Asians often eat with their eyes, the product form itself as attractive, is part of the culinary experience.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we actually have a superior crab product, but the shell has a little more of a darkish tinge, it's larger. Gulf crab, as I mentioned just a minute ago, has more of a reddish hue to the carapace, it's smaller, it has a ready adaptation into the Japanese market. If we were to investigate cooking and sections with cracked crab, pre-cracked, that has a ready marketplace in Japan.

Now are we going to be able to substitute 125 million pounds of Newfoundland and Labrador snow crab into alternative markets? Are we able to pivot quickly into other markets? I think we all have to be

realistic and say that is an ongoing necessity and effort, but the pivot will take time. Even with this it could predicted or you might be able to say that 2,500 tons. If we were to displace 2,500 tons of otherwise American destined crab to Japan, it would be significant, but it would still not be the marker.

Now with that said, what we all need to concentrate on is that this is not a binary equation. This is not an on-off switch. The introduction of the 25 per cent tariff, while excessively problematic and hurtful to both sides of the boarder, the Trump administration has decided it is in the White House's best interest and Trump's best interest to hurt Americans, to hurt consumers, for his own purposes. It will be up to him to explain that, but with that said, does that mean that no crab will be sold and consumed in the United States in 2025? Absolutely not.

There will be Newfoundland and Labrador crab that will be sold and consumed. The best crab in all of the planet will be consumed in the United States coming from Newfoundland and Labrador. Will the 25 per cent tariff have an effect on the elasticity of demand? It likely will. To which degree has to be determined. No one can soothsay, nobody can look into a crystal ball with clarity and say that the CEO of Kroger, which is one of the largest retail grocery store chains in the United States, which is a major buyer of Newfoundland snow crab –

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

**G. BYRNE:** Oh no. Don't say it; not true.

**CHAIR:** It is.

**S. COADY:** You can go back again.

**G. BYRNE:** I'll go back again.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

My colleague who spoke on his first Interim Supply reading this morning, from Baie Verte - Green Bay, did a wonderful job with it. He talked about the responsibility to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think all 40 of us in the House are cognizant of the debt that we would have. We're cognizant of the servicing of our public debt.

For those viewers in the District of Bonavista and in the province that are watching at this late hour in the afternoon, it's the same as if you had a visa card and your visa card is maxed out but you're paying on the interest in order to keep the card active. To keep it going you're paying on your debt.

We pay on the total debt that we have. Our total debt in '16-'17, when, when the government came in the first full year, would be total debt, was close to \$16 billion. In '21-'22 it was \$24 billion. At the end of '23-'24 it was \$31 billion and that would bring us now to where we are.

Servicing that public debt – get a load of these figures – in '23-'24 to pay on that Visa card and to service that debt it was \$722 million; close to \$723 million. In '24-'25, last year, that grew by over \$92 million to now become \$815 million. That is to service our debt. That's not a party thing that we throw out. It's a concern that my colleague for Baie Verte - Green Bay raised and said that we are cognizant; cognizant of how much we owe and what it costs to service the debt. That is a fair question that he's asked. What are we going to do and what is the plan?

This morning, I was notified that, for those who don't know or are watching, I am the Member for the District of Bonavista and in that district, we've got a large processing

plant that processes only snow crab. So when I heard this morning that the minister had a news conference on the ground floor, I was going to attend. Not my first one because I did one in 2019 when I first arrived. I think I may have been the only one outside of the media that was in that room this morning to listen, but I went there wanting to know what the action plan was for the fishing industry, of which my district is so significant.

Snow crab processed, 400-plus workers all from the local area, flat out in the seasonal processing of snow crab. Bring in around \$350,000 in payroll per week to the economy. I went there this morning to find out what the action plan was, and I may have been caught up in the Foreign Affairs minister who reported late last night that we have done our work and we are ready to respond. I went there this morning to look at what our response was going to be.

The minister spoke and he mentioned about the 25 per cent tariff. He compared it to 1992 when the moratorium was on; it rocked our foundation. This is rocking our foundation. He said the fishery was greatly impacted; 95 per cent of our snow crab go to the States. We are ready and we will fight back – if I have that and I'm paraphrasing, but I think that might be a direct quote, what he had.

Two things I gleaned from the meeting. One is that we're going to have fisheries diversification. The minister just spoke about it again, \$5.7 million. He didn't mention the amount, unless I missed it, but that federal diversification for markets. But you know and I know and the viewers now who depend on the water know that that's not going to help us out with the snow crab now. It will in due course and it's a good venture, but it won't now.

And then he mentioned, we will support financially. That caught my attention. I said: Woah, there it is, maybe there's something there. Then he branched off to cod, which

I'll come to in a short time. But when a CBC reporter asked him about what support he was going to offer to extend and while I sat there thinking about those processors, the 400-plus in the Bonavista plant, the minister's response was, we would have reciprocal tariffs.

I walked out with nothing to be able to share with those in my district to say what is the plan – what is the plan? To tell my colleagues and those listening, when the media were finished with the minister, I had an opportunity to speak. I had asked the minister to remain. I didn't do it sarcastically; I just thought, out of kindness, just to listen to what I'm going to say as opposed to picking up pieces if it's on the media and the minister, to his credit, he stayed.

I had mentioned that there's going to be risk associated with snow crab going forward. There's a degree of risk. There's going to be a risk for the harvester – true. There's going to be a risk for the processor, whether he processes at all because he's not sure about the markets – 95 per cent going to the States. There's a risk for the federal government who said that they're going to be on board; we're going to be there to support industry. How? I don't know. Number four would be our provincial government are going to be there to support and take a share of that risk.

Four entities: The harvester takes some risk, the processor takes risks, the federal government takes some risks to get us through this situation we're in this current year, and the provincial government. What percentage would be is what you negotiate, what you sit down and plan.

My mistake was when I walked into that room, I thought that would've been done. I thought that would've been done to know that the processors, the harvesters, would know that government's got our back. Here's the degree of what we've got and we're not surprised by the tariffs today coming on March 4 because we've had that

conversation and everyone's got an understanding of what the risk involvement is by all the players that would be involved. Now, maybe I'll get a chance to talk a little more, but then he pivoted to cod. I'm not sure with the cod because I thought the gist of it would be cod. The minister desires that to rescind the commercial nature of our fishery, no offshore trawlers, and to stay with the first 115,000 with no offshore, what he would do. He wanted to go back to the science base, not the commercial.

The minister can speak to it a little later, but in my 30 seconds left, if the biomass of cod is anywhere between 320,000 and 350,000 metric tons, if it is, a reasonable harvest would be 20 per cent of that. Do the math. A reasonable harvest would be 70,000 metric tons. We're at 19,000. The only thing I would say: We've got to have the ecosystem balance, and that would be a conversation for another day as my time is out.

Thank you.

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

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

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity just to complete my thoughts on a very, very serious issue.

I like to engage the House as often as I possibly can on matters related to fisheries, fisheries management and the well-being of our province and our coastal communities. This is an opportunity, of course, in Interim Supply to be able to do so.

Since becoming Fisheries Minister, I have not had one question yet in Question Period on the fishery from the Opposition. So it really is helpful to me to be able to use this time to advance what the House understands and knows and can contribute to fisheries management.

I appreciate the hon. Member for Bonavista coming to the media availability this morning and adding his perspectives. We did outline very specific initiatives, which may or may not have been lost by the hon. Member, about sharing risk and supporting through risk management with industry. That is the \$5.75 million that's being made available for market diversification of taxpayers' money. That is assisting with risk and risk management, providing reasonable supports for labour market shortages or labour market concerns. That is mitigating risk through market expansion.

The hon. Member notes that he made himself available to the media and he asked me to stay, and I was happy to do so. But the interesting thing about it was I stayed longer than the hon. Member and I engaged in a conversation with the media themselves. The media of Newfoundland and Labrador, some members asked me, what exactly was the Member for Bonavista referring to when he asked for some sort of risk mitigation or risk engagement?

And I couldn't answer them, because I didn't know what the Member for Bonavista was referring to. But I did explain to them that it's possibly true that what is being requested by the Progressive Conservative Opposition is that Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayers would intervene in the pricing disputes. As I explained in the media availability, as I explained, and generally well accepted by industry, is that the industry themselves are engaged in collective price negotiations and they asked for the opportunity to arrive at that without any real or perceived intervention by government to have this a free and fair bargaining exercise.

Now that's one of the things that the 10-point plan of increasing competition and increasing capacity did indeed help to make available to them and there were great accolades for the 10-point plan. There was also strong, strong support for other

measures that we created to help ensure strong free enterprise in our fishery.

Madam Chair, it goes without saying that if you look at how things have evolved, would you have ever thought there would come a day when every public sector union in Newfoundland and Labrador came out unanimously endorsing with the FFAW stronger and greater private enterprise, free enterprise? Our fishery is changing. When every public sector union in Newfoundland and Labrador says strongly and says out loud, it's time for our fishery to enjoy free enterprise. Then, of course, that must tell us something.

I was left somewhat wanting as to exactly what the position of the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was and its Fisheries critic. Risk management, risk intervention: does that mean that government should step in if there's a difference in the price, the processors are prepared to – I'm just using hypothetical numbers, so don't take this – if the processors are prepared to offer \$2 a pound but the harvesters want \$3.50 a pound, is it such that the government should step in and cover the full middle, the \$1.50?

Well, I asked that question of some harvesters today, including John Efford, and he said that would be preposterous. Preposterous if the taxpayer in Newfoundland and Labrador were expected to subsidize snow crab consumption by Americans by offering \$1.50 intervention to fill that gap, that would be preposterous was the response from harvesters. Because it was noted that it would do two things: it would fundamentally change collective bargaining because no longer was there any discipline to what the parties to the collective bargaining would ask for because there'd be an absolute – if government and taxpayers were to just simply fill the gap between the difference between what processors were putting on the table and what harvesters were expecting for their

hard work then you might as well cancel all future negotiations.

If that were to be the case, that was the reaction from harvesters today of that particular scenario, price setting would end, and the taxpayer of Newfoundland and Labrador would spend hundreds of millions of dollars to subsidize the palates and the tables of American families. That's not in the cards.

With that said, I'm still challenged to understand what it is exactly that the hon. Member and the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador is referring to when they ask for greater detail about risk management and risk mitigation. How you mitigate risk is diversification: you put millions of dollars into diversifying markets, we are doing that; you put millions of dollars into product diversification, we are going to do that; you put significant efforts into a Team Newfoundland and Labrador initiative that we all work together to get this done, that is exactly where we are headed. That is risk mitigation.

No, there is absolutely no demand or desire by those who advocate free enterprise for government and taxpayers to simply say let's bypass free, collective and fair negotiations and let's just get the taxpayer to simply fill in the gulf or the gap between what harvesters may expect and what processors may offer. That is ludicrous, to use the words of those who I spoke to from the harvesting sector today. What really needs to happen is government needs to work hand in hand with industry to get us over this hump and to get us selling crab into the American market, which we still can do. Price will be critical to that but also diversifying markets.

So, Madam Chair, Team Newfoundland and Labrador is strong, Team Newfoundland and Labrador is active, Team Newfoundland and Labrador will get results. We have an existential crisis before us that we have not seen since the 1992 moratorium, but as we

did then, we'll get through this today and we'll be stronger for it.

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

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

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

I move that the Committee rise and report progress on Bill 105 and ask leave to sit again.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole on Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report some progress and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed that they have made some progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Presently.

**SPEAKER:** Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

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

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

I move that this House do now stand in recess until 6:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER:** Seconder, please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** This House do stand recessed until 6:30 p.m. this afternoon.

