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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Wednesday

March 5, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit visitors.

**Government Business**

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**SPEAKER:** Motion defeated.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 13, second reading of Bill 106, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that Bill 106 be read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 106, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7." (Bill 106)

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

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

This is a rather straightforward bill. Today we are introducing amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act*. You'll recall, we do regular amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act* to extend the tax reduction on gasoline and diesel of seven cents per litre for the next year. That's until March 31, 2026.

This maintains the lower price at the pumps. It lowers the price at the pumps by 8.05 cents per litre. That includes HST and I think it is the lowest provincial tax on gasoline among all provinces. I'm going to repeat that, Speaker, for those who always say that we are the highest: This is the lowest gasoline tax in the country.

The cost of doing this, Speaker, would be \$70.4 million this year. So by reducing it, that's how much the cost is to the coffers of the government and I just want to make a note here that if we were collecting the full amount of the gasoline tax, it would be \$162.6 million.

Now, Speaker, we spend on roads in this province each year about \$265 million. That's how much we're spending this year: \$265 million on roads. As a matter of fact, next year it's going to \$340 million.

The tax reduction for gasoline and diesel was initially set until January 1 of 2023, but we've extended it each subsequent year. This affordability measure is in addition to the more than \$750 million in targeted short- and long-term measures announced since March of 2022. I think this is incredibly important to note that while inflation has come down, cost of living is still very, very expensive, and I'd say that there are a lot of people in our province that are still finding impacts on their pocketbook.

Now with tariffs, they're going to find it even more. The tariff situation is not only going to impact people of the United States; it's going to impact the people of our communities. So keeping this gas tax again for another year, I think it's prudent and responsible, even though it is impacting the revenues of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Look, we recognize that affordability remains a concern for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and maintaining this, that we first introduced in 2022, is one of many that we're helping residents with daily expenses.

Again, Speaker, \$750 million is a lot of money to put back in the people's pockets. I wish we could do even more than that, but this is one way that we're keeping the lowest gas tax in the country, ensuring that people are keeping that eight cents per litre in their pockets, especially as we move through with these tariffs now impacting all of us as well.

I hope everyone in this House expeditiously approves this bill.

Thank you.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to get up here this morning and talk about the gas tax, because it is one tax –

and really if you look at it, it's an internal tariff by government on our citizens. It is an impact right across every one of our districts, so it is great to see that the government actually listened to us, the Opposition, for a little bit and support the removal of the tax.

We've been lobbying for it. We've been lobbying for it continuously and, in fact, our leader was out mid-February on it and asking for a permanent deletion of that gas tax. We understand the impact on every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. It impacts citizens going to work. It impacts citizens going for medical appointments. It impacts their daily life in so many ways. It also impacts the cost of living because so much of what is purchased here in Newfoundland and Labrador is brought into the province. Transportation costs are a major issue, and we have to look at ways to not just reduce it in the short term but to reduce it for the long term. It also has a significant impact on our productivity across our resource sectors: fishing, mining, forestry, agriculture and something that's near and dear to all of us in the province, as well, our tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, we applaud the government's efforts to listening to us to reduce this gas tax. Unfortunately, they have not listened to us and have made this a permanent decision. This, as I highlighted, is an action that must be taken to be permanent to ensure we look at the long-term viability of a number of our business activities and impact across our province on our residents.

We are dispersed across this province. Transportation is a major impact, and we have to always keep that in mind. The GDP of this province is not generated here, in the House of Assembly. It is generated across the province and, particularly, in a number of our small communities. It is that impact of the tax that we have to consider in how our GDP is generated.

The reduction of this gas tax and the taxation, like I said, an internal tariff on our residents is similar to where we are with the carbon tax, and we have voiced a concern with the carbon tax for the last three to four years. It was the government side that brought in a carbon tax and then reversed course when their masters in Ottawa decided that they wanted the carbon tax for themselves.

We have to always keep in mind the impact on Newfoundland and Labrador of taxing our transportation because of the impact on goods across the province, internal trade and stuff that's brought in and exported out.

Why do we want this permanent? We want this permanent for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think the tariffs now in the US and the uncertainty in the US has awakened a lot of people, not just in Newfoundland and Labrador but across Canada as well, of being both competitive and increasing productivity across our industries. Taking control of our own destiny. As we take control of our own destiny, it is important that we look continuously at opportunities to reduce taxes. Not just for the short term, but for the long term.

I would like to highlight some specific examples of transportation cost impact on a number of businesses that I have visited over the last few months. For example, in my district there is a great small business called Coastal-Vokey boats. A huge impact on them is the resin for that fibreglass that's brought in from the United States, mostly. Significant impact on them is that transportation cost. So both the carbon tax and the gas tax, really if you look at it overall, the tax on transportation has a huge impact on the end price for which they can sell their boats.

They're selling their boats, not just in Newfoundland and Labrador, but in the rest of Canada as well. They have a great product. What is impacting their product is

transportation cost. They can sell more boats nationally and internationally if the transportation cost on them was reduced. And that's where we have to look at opportunities to help a number of our small businesses across the province.

It also has a huge impact on our residents. Now out in my district, if someone is going, say from LaScie to Grand Falls, to the hospital, because quite often the hospital in Baie Verte is on temporary diversion, as similar to the one in Springdale. So if they're going for services in Grand Falls that they can't get at either Baie Verte or Springdale, they're looking at a three-hour trip. A significant transportation cost impact on them.

Now the Medical Transportation Assistance Program will only cover a portion of that. They're still going to be out-of-pocket, but that out-of-pocket could be significantly reduced if we here in this House of Assembly, particularly on the government side, looked to keep any tax on transportation as low as possible. As low as possible and to do it for the long term. We have to protect our communities. We have to protect our residents.

As well, we have across Newfoundland and Labrador, a lot of workers coming from one community to work in another, so getting to work. Getting to work, is a huge impact on them for the transportation costs. This is not just in one district, this is across all our 40 districts where the impact of that tax on transportation that they are feeling every day is having a significant impact on them, on what is left over that they can spend on groceries, on what they can spend on discretionary opportunities. Probably that is why we're seeing in downtown St. John's right now, I think, since the start of the year, five to six restaurants that have closed, because regular Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't have that discretionary funding available because too much of it, of their hard-earned money, is being eaten up in transportation costs. We must continue to

look at every opportunity to reduce the tax on transportation, not just for the short term but for the long term.

Across my district right now, there's a significant opportunity in mining, and that is going to lead to two demands that I foresee. We're going to have some labour challenges and, with labour, we're going to have some housing challenges. In fact, those housing challenges are already there.

To build housing, you need a variety of supplies, and that is where transportation costs have a huge impact on that. Whether it's moving lumber from across Newfoundland and Labrador, our internal sawmills, or whether it is bringing supplies in from outside, those costs are passed on to the end builder, a resident themselves, or if they hire a builder, those costs then are reflected in the end sale price.

That is why, as the Opposition here has voiced vociferously over the last three to four years of why items like the carbon tax, the gas tax, must be kept as low as possible to ensure productivity and to ensure we reduce the cost of living on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians right across this province.

The gas tax – and I will highlight what my fellow MHA from Northern Labrador has repeatedly highlighted, and that is the cost of living in the North, the cost of bringing in supplies to the North, the cost of those groceries in the North. The significant underlying factor in all of that is the transportation costs. We have a responsibility to keep those transportation costs as low as possible. Again, as I highlighted, not just for the short term but for the long term.

Right across our province whether you're in Port aux Basques, up in Nain or here in St. John's, every one of our residents every day when they're shopping, they're seeing the impact of the gas tax, the carbon tax, on the end products that they buy. Whether that is

a significant milestone product in their life, like a vehicle or a house; or a daily need, like groceries or the gas in their vehicle for themselves to get back and forth to work. Again, we have a responsibility to them.

A lot of them are struggling now. We've had people across this province that have given up home insurance – they've given up home insurance. They've taken that risk so that they could have additional money to spend on groceries, on the basic needs of life, because the transportation costs that they are incurring are eating up so much more of their daily budget.

So when we look at this – and we support the removal of the gas tax, but we want it for an extended time period. We want to make this permanent. There's no need, I guess, to continue to come back here and waste time administratively in doing this every year. Let's just look to do this now on a permanent basis.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Let's do this now for what is in the best interests of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. We owe it to them and we owe it to ourselves.

Like I said, one of the biggest challenges that we have in the province right now is housing. Housing, the situation is acute, and I believe it's going to become even more acute, particularly across Central Newfoundland, as economic opportunities continue to percolate and expand.

A significant impact on housing, as I highlighted, is the transportation cost. That impacts builders. That impacts builders' decisions. That impacts builders hiring people locally. That impacts economic opportunities then across all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We must look to be more competitive and more productive across the province, and one way to do this is to look at the taxation.

In looking at that taxation, not just for the short term but for the long term, reducing the gas tax for an additional year out to the end of March 2026 is a start, but we need an expanded opportunity for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by making this a permanent reduction.

So here we are in a situation of uncertainty, with tariffs being brought in, where we can control our own destiny and reduce some of the tariff burden on every Newfoundlander and Labradorian for the foreseeable future by making this a permanent reduction – making this a permanent reduction.

As I've highlighted here, with some examples across daily living with impact on driving for medical opportunities, with impact on driving just to get to work, with impact on small business, with impact on addressing some of the major crises in the province like housing, it all comes back to the impact on the taxation on transportation.

So let's look where we can to make this a permanent impact.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Once again, we're coming in here now for another short-term pause on the reduction of the gasoline tax. This is, I think, the third year now in a row that we're just temporarily pausing it. I remember even asking the first time we did this, why isn't this a permanent fixture? If we're going year by year, it leaves a lot of uncertainty to residents of the province on what's going to happen here and then if it does not become a permanent pause and we quickly put this back on to residents, that will also have a negative impact on the residents. We've seen how

things are quickly skyrocketing and increasing, the costs and stuff like this.

This is why I have to ask: Why aren't we doing this as a permanent fixture? If we're doing it year by year, this needs to be something that's permanent. It does help individuals, especially those who are in the gig economy, delivery drivers that are in the gig economy who are not making a living wage but who are required to pay for their fuel and pay for things like that to conduct their jobs. This is one thing that we worry about, especially on top of all the other, I guess, systemic issues with those working in the gig economy and some of those kinds of precarious jobs. There's a whole other thing we could get into with labour standards and that, but this is one thing like that.

You also have to look at the fact that this is one portion of the province, but there's also those who don't drive, who don't get the full benefit of this reduction as well, and that's where we keep asking about other options and things to help bring down the cost. We're in a very precarious time right now. We don't know what the American administration are feeling when they wake up in the morning and make rash decisions which are going to impact our economy.

So, once again, we're going to say we need to do multiple things over different sectors to put money back into Newfoundlander's and Labradorian's pockets. Because if we want people to buy local, if we want people to be able to participate in our local economy, we have to make sure they have money in their pocket to actually do so. If they're paying out the nose for – well, this is one thing, but paying out the nose for home heating or groceries or rent, there's nothing left in their pocket to contribute back into the local economy. So then we're back to square one.

Things like reducing the provincial portion of the HST on home heating – we see recently now a lot of people saying that the price of

heating is gone up through the roof and there's no relief for them, especially those who have electric heat because they don't qualify for any of the rebates or anything that's going around, only those who are on fuel, so anyone with electric heat are not getting any relief from this. We're taxing them. We're taxing 15 per cent on their heat. If we can bring that down, that's more money back into their pockets as well.

We look at the cost of groceries, we look at the cost of things – we seen that the federal tax holiday was a big, significant help on a lot of people buying groceries. One of the things I quickly realized is how little actual groceries is protected under the tax exemption. There's a lot of stuff that are in grocery stores that's taxed that you'd look at it and go, this is taxed? It's not that it's chips or pop or anything like that; it's actually a lot of foods. If it's repackaged or anything in the grocery store, it's taxed, any sort of handling.

So there's a lot of stuff that I found out really quickly was taxed before and it's not taxed now, and now after February 15, it's taxed again. That was something that actually did help a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but it has to be permanent because we're now going into this time where our economy is going to be a little bit stretched and things like that. Like I said, we're all here in this House of Assembly asking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to buy local, but they can't buy local if they've got no money in their pockets.

We think this is one thing that's good, it's fine, but there are other things that we should be doing and really taking a serious look at to make sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, one, would be able to make sure they have the necessities of life and, two, to be able to make sure that we can provide for our local economy and make sure that the small businesses and stuff in this province can continue to thrive in these uncertain times.

Yes, this is one thing. Once again, we'll support it. I really think it's time to actually make this permanent. The second thing is we need to make sure that there are other measures in place to help people that actually help a broader swath of the population, make sure that people can heat their homes and make sure that people can go to the grocery store and be able to afford it and make sure that people have all the necessities they can; but, also at the same time, giving them the ability to participate in the economy, participate in the local economy, and make sure that we can do the absolute best we can for those people. We see all kinds of different measures and stuff that we look at and go, yeah, that's fine. But it doesn't go far enough.

Once again, Speaker, I ask the minister, there has to be more broader things that we need to look at to make sure – because we're in a very precarious time in our economy. We know that our largest trading partner is not playing ball, and – well, in another sense, they're tanking their own economy, but at the same time, they're going to try to take us down with them.

But we have got to stand firm. We've got to stand strong that we're not going to be bullied or we're going to be intimidated or anything like that. But, in order to do that, we need to make sure that our people, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, have the ability to participate in our economy and make sure that they have adequate shelter, make sure that they can go to the grocery store and get their groceries that they need and make sure that they live to the fullest.

That should be a responsibility that we do because if we do those things, then we are helping our own economy. We're helping our own people. We can stand up and stand strong because we've done it before and we can do it again. I think this is something that – so, one, I agree with this; two, I think it should be permanent; and, three, I think we should be doing more for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

I ditto what my colleague before me stated. Any time that you can reduce the expenses and the money coming out of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, it's a good thing. Maintaining the reduction of seven cents, it's a good thing and, yes, I think we probably all agree on this side that we would wish for it to be a permanent but, nevertheless, we do have the seven-cent reduction and how can you not be in favour of that – how can you not be in favour of that?

I'm not a fan of redundancy, Mr. Speaker. You probably know that. I try not to repeat myself too many times. I know that one of your goals would be to make sure that redundancy doesn't occur. Under the gas tax, when we look at the gas tax and the seven-cent reduction, the gas tax is primarily received by the government to make sure that the maintenance of roads is up to a standard that would be acceptable. That's what the gas tax is earmarked for: Look after the roads in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think the minister may have stated that we can't commit to a permanent one because we may need funds for road construction going forward, maybe, or hence. So anyway, that is what the Member for Bonavista had heard that that may be the situation where we couldn't commit to permanence because we may need some funds within for our roads.

The District of Bonavista has the worst roads in the province – the District of Bonavista has the worst roads in the province. That's redundant. I repeated it for effect to know that we pay our gas tax, but we find that we've got roads that it's unsafe to drive on. They're dangerous to drive on,

especially with the conditions in nighttime. Daytime, you can avoid the roads and the craters that would be in them, but nighttime is a problem.

So what happens when someone damages a vehicle in the District of Bonavista and the gas tax that we have is for maintenance of our roads, the residents in the District of Bonavista pay. Well, they can make a claim. Take some pictures, send in your expense account into the Department of Transportation and you will send it into a very kind individual who is the insurance adjustor and claims administrator.

Unfortunately, since I've got in, in 2019, I've been directing my constituents and others to send in the claims to Transportation and Infrastructure. Residents in the District of Bonavista will say, with the expenditure of the gas tax and the maintenance of the roads, we would see Transportation and Infrastructure vehicles travelling over every square kilometre of our roads daily. We see the surveillance of our roads daily and the residents in Bonavista would ask, how can these large craters in the roads go so long and not be tended to? That's a fair question.

Residents in the District of Bonavista will say, well, you got the seven cents, your tax, and then the HST goes on top of that so you're taxing on top of tax, and the revenue that we get in, which I cannot recall now, from the gas tax, that would have been in the Estimates of last year, but a significant amount of money to maintain the roads we'd have.

I just want to share with you the latest submission into the insurance adjuster and the claims administrator. It comes from a young, working lady by the name of Terri Lynn Anderson. Terri Lynn Anderson submitted it on March 1, 2025, and if may enter into the record what she states, this has within the gas tax:

Hi there – and named the adjuster by name – just touching base to see what the depot

had to say on the matter. I have further information on my vehicle. The mechanic replaced the CV shaft and the ball joint at a cost of \$480, which I paid on February 27. Upon test driving, I drove the road next to nowhere from the garage and became unable to drive when hitting the gas. The vehicle was making a severe loud sound.

What started was she figures she was travelling 20 kilometres per hour and hit a crater, of which she submitted the picture on. She had to get a wrecker to tow the vehicle back to the garage to get it fixed. What she did is she utilized friends to bring her back and forth to work. She thinks that she's looking at, when it's all said and done, \$1,000.

So I would ask the government and I would ask the minister, of all the submissions that I've sent in since 2019, and maybe province wide, how many of those claims have been settled? I am not aware of one. We pay our gas tax, we pay for our roads and, all of a sudden, it's a public safety issue that we have people with untold expenses that the roads are damaged.

I presented a petition last year and the petition that stated that a contractor, then with J-1 Contracting, the head of the company, then it stated that he could fix every pothole in the District of Bonavista within two weeks. Not one week, like the rumours and the talk in the district would be, but in two weeks.

The petition that I presented asked government if they could do it in six weeks. And we know that if we're not going to have potholes that are going to damage our vehicles, listen, that was better than what we have now.

And residents would ask, how can we travel over a road and know that a pothole exists when the grey Transportation and Infrastructure vehicle must note it that it's a significant damage potential to any vehicle that would hit that pothole? Why isn't it

attended to in a more timely manner? If gas tax was destined for that, then I would say to you we are falling short of that.

I don't think a reduction in the amount we pay should mean that we're going to be worse off. A lot of these issues, I think, are operational issues. If that contractor can do the two weeks, we ought to be able to do it in six weeks. No doubt about it. Maybe there's a different process to make sure that if we got a cavernous hole on Route 230 and that's unattended for three weeks, it ought not to be. Have a plan to know that, listen, once it's identified, 24 to 48 hours, we know that's fixed. That would be more than reasonable.

In my time back, I want to pivot to another couple of issues that I had mentioned. I had mentioned in the House in a petition that in the large portion of the district, in the District of Bonavista, we have large rock on the road. We assume that there's a degree of salt within that stone that's put on that road, but we're not sure as to what the ratio would be. I asked on February 15 what the ratio was, but I haven't got a response. But I'm sure I'll get one. But we know we've got large rock.

I've only since found out, after many people reporting broken windshields, that the screen which filters out the large rocks and the frozen large chunks of salt that are there has not been maintained and there's large, cavernous holes in that too, of which when they do the filtering, it goes through, the truck picks it up, loads it aboard, they disperse it on the roads, and what happens? Someone loses a windshield, someone loses a headlight, paint chips over someone's new vehicle and now we're talking about the potholes – which is covered by the gas tax – then we're also talking about the large stone and clusters of salt that would be utilized on our roads.

I would say that's not good enough. That is an operational management issue. We ought to be doing better than what we do. I

can see the evidence to know that that is not the case. Who is ultimately responsible? Who is ultimately responsible? I know many might look at the MHA would be, the MHA would pass it on to the department and ultimately, it's the government that would be responsible for making sure that the equipment is maintained, and these roads are affected.

I'll conclude with this one, at the end. We had asked the government to reinstate a piece of snow clearing equipment on Route 235, in the King's Cove area, like it has been for 50 to 60-plus years. The rationale for having it in King's Cove was that with no 24-hour snow clearing in case medical emergency occurred or the fire department needed to be deployed to some area on Route 235, that snow clearing equipment was strategically placed so that the plow could lead and clear the roads for the emergency equipment. That seemed and worked for over six decades.

The last two years, they don't have that piece of equipment in on Route 235. Now in the event of an emergency, some 60 kilometres away, the person has to come up and get the truck and come all the way in Route 235, the King's Cove area, free up the roads for the emergency response vehicles in order to be engaged.

Speaker, we all know in the District of Bonavista and government ought to know that that is unacceptable, that is an operational issue. I would ask that those are some outstanding issues, it's under the gas tax of which we pay. I would like to think that those are three issues that ought to be addressed and not costing a lot of money, work within the budget that they've got but have a better operational plan to make sure that those issues are taken care of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Again, it's a pleasure here to stand and talk about Newfoundland and Labrador and how gasoline taxes affect the people that reside here every single day and to speak on behalf of them.

The oil and gas sector, of course, worldwide – it's a Mafia of the world, make no mistake about it. They set oil prices, we have to abide by them, I mean, they could come out tomorrow and run up gas to \$2 a litre and guess what? You're going to pay it because you have to. That's the thumb that we are all under. It's sort of a curse and a blessing at the same time because oil and gas, of course, we love it here in this province. We are only happy to have that sector in our province. It employs so many people and it's something that Newfoundland and Labrador stand proudly upon. We are an oil and gas province, 100 per cent, and we should be proud of it. I am extremely proud of it.

When it comes to global oil price, of course, that's not something that's in our control. Something that is in our control, of course, are the levers that we have as a government are the taxes, including gas tax. Our responsibilities and jobs as representatives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are to ensure that we use whatever levers we can, including taxation. To keep as much money into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so they can go about their day-to-day living; they can do their small business; they can buy goods and services, and we want to ensure that that money keeps moving around. Savings are great but money is not meant to be stagnant. Money is meant to move around within our communities, within our province and that is how we get the economy up and running again and that's how we keep our economy

stimulated. We want to ensure that we do everything we can to keep that going.

Some of the gas tax impacts, of course, lots of people have already talked about it today and I'll talk about a few of the similar things and a few different things. I think it was mentioned by my colleague to my left here, from Baie Verte - Green Bay, about tourism earlier. Not only are we an oil and gas province, I think that we are a legitimate tourism province as well. People come from all over the world to Newfoundland and Labrador because of the scenery we have, because of where we are situated on the globe, because of the people that we surround ourselves with, the events that we have and we want to ensure that we have every incentive that we possibly can to let the world know that Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the greatest places on the planet to visit.

So tourism worldwide is great, but in Canada we see, of course, what's happening south of the border, here now, but we want to ensure that the message that we go out is for anybody in Canada or the US – if you want to come to Newfoundland and Labrador, please come, and we want to make sure that those incentives are there.

When they look at their travel costs, I mean, everybody is holding on to their money nowadays and it's just something that we have to do. There's not a whole lot of disposable cash moving around. We want to let them know when they look at their budget for a vacation next summer or next year or this summer, we want to let them know that, you know what, when you're going down line by line, accommodations, Newfoundland and Labrador, wow, that gas is a little bit cheaper than it was last year. If this bill didn't pass today, well our gas is a little bit more expensive, so maybe that could alter my vacation plans, and we don't want that. We want them to come here. We want them to look at our gas tax. We want them to look at the cost it would be to travel

across the Island part and the Big Land part and say, you know what, that's very reasonable for what I want to do this year and that's the direction I'm going to go. We want those incentives to be there for our tourism sector.

It's not just the international or the national tourism sector, of course, it's inside of our own province. It's inside of our own province. I can't imagine that there's too many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that have seen every single part of our province and wherever you go in our province, it's one of the greatest things ever, there's every single different little sector. Every single little nook and cranny has something different to offer.

It's pretty cool, you know, you talk about – and I grew up in Bay Bulls and my colleague is doing a fantastic job for the District of Ferryland. You can drive 20 minutes up the shore, 25, 30 minutes and the Irish brogue and the accents, completely different from 20 minutes away to the next couple of towns up. The scenery is so much different on the Irish Loop. It's absolutely beautiful to see within our own province how many different places there are to see. We want to make sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, when they make their summer plans to travel, stay right here. There's nothing wrong with staying right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, because we have so many different things to offer in such a small place and we want to get that message out there. If you want to travel, travel at home and we're going to help you do whatever you can, including cut the gas tax here today.

Staycation, absolutely. The staycation is absolutely impacted by gas tax because if we have a higher gasoline percentage, people are going to leave the Island. If they see a lower gasoline – to fill up their vehicle or their RV is cheaper to do it in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, they're going to go there, they just will. So we're happy to have them right here at home.

Another thing, and I haven't heard it spoken about yet today and my colleague for Bonavista will know this all too well, when it comes to children's activities in school, recreational activities, extracurricular activities. My youngest son, of course, he just finished a volleyball tournament here a couple of weeks ago, fantastic to see. Back in my day when I was growing up, you grow up and you'd go to a hockey tournament, basketball tournament whatever, you get billeted out, three or four youngsters inside a car with one family and that's the way we saved money back then.

Nowadays it's just doesn't seem to be that way. The societal pressures that are put on parents, to pay these fees, is extraordinary. Well now, you know, you need a special form to take another child. You need to get accommodations because they're not billeting kids anymore. To have a gas tax, lowered, cut permanently, hopefully one day, it's a huge, huge savings to somebody, huge.

There are parents out there, make no mistake, that will not put their gifted children into sports or any other recreational activities, because they can't afford to do so and that's a sin, that's terrible. Any relief that we can give, including relief at the pumps, that's going to help families. That's going to help families with these extracurricular activities that children definitely need. We are hoping, again, that this becomes a permanent thing in the future, and it will give parents that confidence to put their kids in extracurricular activities.

You talk about how much money you'd be saving, \$6 on fill-up here and there with this gas tax, it adds up. It truly adds up. When somebody is living on a budget, day-to-day sort of thing, oh by God, you know what, \$100 at the end of the month is a lot of money. It truly is a lot of money, and it could make the difference in the decisions that people are making right here at home.

Again, my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay talked about work and employment earlier. I mean, our geography in Newfoundland and Labrador, as beautiful as it is, sometimes handcuffs us; it does, it really, really does. There are people who are driving an hour, hour and twenty minutes back and forth to work every single day on our highways. We want to ensure that they get whatever breaks they can.

I talked to somebody recently who got a job with a furnace repair place. They offered him a job, it was a decent wage, but he had to drive 25 minutes back and forth to work and couldn't take the job. Could not take the job, so he had to go back and forth to the Mainland, like he was doing before, but he wanted to stay but that reduction in pay he had to walk that fine line, he could not take that job.

Eventually they offered him a company vehicle because they knew the talent that he had and that's what he took. So it really helped him out and a gas card, of course. That made the difference in him taking on that job and I'm very happy that he did. I just want to see as much relief as I possibly can for those who are travelling on our highways, back and forth, throughout the province, the good men and women. The industry and trade or wherever else; the medical, a lot of people, a lot of nurses, a lot of LPNs, home care workers, they have to travel and, in order to do that, they need to fill up their vehicles. If they're going to fill up their vehicles, we want to give them as much relief at the pump as we possibly can and keep that money in their pockets where it belongs.

Small business here in Newfoundland and Labrador, I'm sure that they are going through gas like you wouldn't believe. They need to pick up their supplies, they need to make their deliveries, and we want them to benefit. We do. We want them to keep going. We don't want to kill small business. If anything, at the end of the day, we want to attract as much small business as we

possibly can but, in order to that, we need to ensure that we give them all the breaks that we can. Again, as a government, that's what we're here to do, grow small business and ensure that people can afford to do their small business.

All those small business owners out there, we want to let you know that we are here for you, and we want to make sure that you can afford to do your business, and of course, attract more small business here. We can't do that if there are extraordinary gas prices. They just won't come here to do it if they see that there are cheaper gas prices in other provinces.

I've talked about it before, the young people and the next generation coming up, that's another group that can really benefit and it's impacted by gas. It truly is. I mean, I remember when I graduated high school, I bought my first car sort of thing – I think it was a Saturn; the old man sold them back in the day – and I remember filling up that car – it was 1995 – at \$32 or \$30 to fill it up from empty? It was extraordinary. It was absolutely extraordinary.

A small car today costs \$80, \$85 to fill up. It just doesn't coincide. But those young people that we want to keep here in Newfoundland and Labrador, well we want to give them the benefit as much as we possibly can. They're impacted, they are, and those young people coming up now, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 years old, they're going to have a decision to make: Are they going to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador or are they going to go across the country?

What do we want to do? I want to keep them here, and I know all of you do as well. So we want to give them as many breaks as we possibly can and that's what we're here to do.

Municipalities: I know they get a lot of their money from the gas tax itself but, at the end of the day, they have a lot to do, too, and the municipalities have never ever felt the

pressures like they have today. They need as much support as we possibly can.

I talked to different municipality groups every other day, of course, as my critic role and we want to create an atmosphere, an environment, where they can really, really stride; they can really, really take advantage of the business that municipalities do, whether it be their emergency vehicles, their town vehicles, whatever business they have to do. Municipalities, you can imagine, go through a ton of gas so this is going to impact them at the end of the day as well.

Our mining, forestry, fishery, all of our resources like that, we are a resource province, and we are very proud of our resources. You know, we got a Calibre Mining up in Central and I think they just changed –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Equinox.

**C. TIBBS:** Equinox. Yes. Thank you very much.

Yes, so they're up there and they're doing great things. Throughout the whole province, mining is absolutely extraordinary.

So we want to make sure that, again, it attracts business here and every little bit counts and I'm sure this is all brought into contention when they are deciding which projects they are going to do. I mean, Valentine Lake, it took some time to get off the ground but we are still in the construction phase, but we'll be up and running very, very soon. We're only happy to do so but those costs to these companies, they add up and they want savings. They're a profit company. They want to make sure that they make their profits, of course. So any break that we can give these companies; any break we can give the fishing industry; any break we can give the forestry industry, we want to ensure that people keep moving and doing business right here in Newfoundland and Labrador and in order to do that, we need to

be a responsible government and do responsible things when it comes to taxation.

The Buchans Highway and it's going to be relevant; I'm just going to veer off just for a second. The Buchans Highway, it's absolutely destroyed by a lot of these big vehicles. I mean, we have big business come in, we have to expect it. That's fine enough but I've said this numerous times, I wish there was a calculation to take the gas tax or the revenue tax, whatever it is, that these big companies bring into the province, some sort of small calculation, where we can keep up the infrastructure of the towns that are being affected by these big industries.

Again, the Buchans Highway up around Millertown, it's being destroyed by logging trucks, by mining trucks and the residents are paying the price: busted up tires, busted up rims, windshields. I just really wish we could come up with a calculation for this gas tax or revenue just to put some money back into the infrastructure because the residents who have been there their entire lives and generations should not have to pay the price on that. They really shouldn't. When we get in government one day, that's something that I'm going to be working on diligently because I would truly like – and it may not be a lot. You may not need a lot just for upkeep every single year just to keep those roads intact. Again, the residents shouldn't have to pay for that.

The transportation of goods and services, which we all know all too well. Gasoline prices affect it, carbon tax affect it, all of these things affect the transportation of goods and services and who's paying the price on that? It's not the owner of Loblaws. They're not paying the tax on it. They're not paying the price on it. What are they doing? They're passing it down the line until it gets where? Until it gets to that single mom that's got to buy groceries for her two kids for the week and just cannot afford to do it anymore. I watched bacon go – it's

extraordinary, actually. This is no exaggeration. I go to the grocery store – it's a great place to talk to people as. When I go to the grocery store over the past month or two – bacon, I've watched bacon go from \$7 to \$8 and now \$9 in the span of six weeks. It's absolutely crazy when you think about it.

And these are the staples, the food that we need to ensure that our families are there. These food prices will continue to rise when gas tax is put on or carbon tax or anything else. It's going to be passed on. It's just getting out of hand for people to really, really have small families here in Newfoundland and Labrador to make a go of it. And it makes a difference, it truly does.

I know the numbers sometimes show that there are more people going in to schools and stuff like that, at five and six years old and our schools are filling up. The percentage of students may be going up a little bit over the past couple of years. But I don't know, for me personally the people I'm talking to – and my wife just turned 40 years old, she has a lot of younger friends in their 30s and stuff. It doesn't seem like people are having kids like they used to. It just does not seem like people are having kids like they used to, because they can't afford to do it. And that is a huge factor, it is. We may not see it today, but we're going to see it down the road.

So whatever break we can give families, small families, single moms, anybody at the pump, it's absolutely crazy. I think I told this story last year, but I'm going to revisit it again for one quick moment, Mr. Speaker. I watched a mom walk into a gas station last year and she got \$6 worth of gas because she needed \$4 for bread. And that was it, that was the money that she had. But she needed \$6 to get to work, to get her paycheque in order to pay for whatever she had to pay for and walk that very thin line.

When we talk about we want this gas tax off permanently, why do we want it off permanently? We want it off permanently

because it will give people the confidence then to keep the money back in their pocket, to spend the money the way it needs to be spent, move it around a little bit, and who knows, maybe then as they spend more money, it would create revenue and it would fall back. I'm not an economist, but it just seems to make sense to me.

So a permanent removal? That's something that we've explored, we've talked about and we've supported. Again, we're going to support this as well. And it's a great step, it is. I mean who's going to stand there and say it's not, do you know what I mean? So I'm very happy that for the next year, of course – I'm sure that everybody is going to support this – we are going to have this gas tax break again. Because the fact of the matter is a lot of people need it. A lot of people truly need it. A lot of people need it.

I talked about our geography doesn't help us, especially – and again, my learned colleague, what a Member he is, talked about medical appointments across the province. It's so damaging on people. When you're suffering with an illness – I talked about it last night as well – I mean you could have a thousand problems, when you have a severe illness, you only have one.

When a family is dealing with an illness, that's enough to deal with as it is. That's enough to have on your mind to keep you up late at night. You can't function your life without it. It's always a stress on you. But to think about, am I going to have the money to get to my specialized appointment five hours away? How do I save up that money? My appointment is next Tuesday; I need to have the gas to afford to get out there, accommodations, all these things come into play.

If you have a severe illness, that's enough stress and pressure on you as it is. Again, this gas tax, taking it off, it's going to help people. It truly is and it's an extraordinary step. We're only too happy to support this here today because we know how important

it is to everybody, to all families across the province. It's extremely, extremely important.

The taxis, the cabs, we have them in Grand Falls-Windsor as well, they feel the crunch. I mean, between the insurance prices it's absolutely extraordinary how cabs and taxis can still run. We are very happy to have our cabs and taxis throughout the province, especially in Grand Falls-Windsor. They help a lot of people, but again, they will see a break. That's a small business in Grand Falls-Windsor that will see and break and are able to continue to do business – their very important business – in Grand Falls-Windsor, as they continue to do.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a lack of options when it comes to alternative transportation. We do. Part of it is because of our geography of course, and that's fine, but the lack of options we have for alternative transportation, it only hurts us at the end of the day. It really, really does. I wish we had more but I just – I can't even see that time. How much time do I have left?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Nine seconds.

**C. TIBBS:** Nine seconds? Oh, perfect.

Anyway, we are supporting this. We appreciate the gas tax being taken off for this year and we hope to see it permanently in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER (Trimper):** Thank you.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand to have a few words on this again, the relief of the gas tax for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I agree that

we're all going to support this. We're all going to feel that it's going to benefit a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I know I will be supporting this bill.

I just want to put it on the record also, the Official Opposition has stated a policy that they would make this permanent and I just wanted to make it quite clear that I would support that. I would definitely support making this here permanent.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Coming back every year and making an announcement, here's what we're going to do, every year, to me it's a signal of politics. Because if we're going to do it every year, it's time to do it permanently. Instead of having a press conference and saying here's what we're doing, here's how we're going to do it, here's how we're helping the people and we're doing it year after year after year, let's make it permanent. That's what we should do.

I heard speaker after speaker here today talking about how it affects every household in the province who has a vehicle or got groceries – everybody. It affects everybody in the province.

I will support the Official Opposition's stand to make this permanent. I will support that.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I think it's a great idea to do it, to have it done, to give the relief of the people of the province, are we going to get this relief again this year; are our prices going to go up this year? It's time to do it permanently and have it off the table so that we can inform the people and reassure the people that the government, which ever government it's going to be, is there for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on a full-time, permanent basis, not on a photo-op basis just before we have to bring a

budget in every year. This is just becoming too political, and you can see it.

Someone like myself who's been around so long, when you see something, announcement after announcement, same announcement every year, you realize that oh, here we go again, budget is coming up again, let's go have a few announcements before we bring in the Interim Supply and before we bring in the budget, let's go get some good mileage out of it and people are home stressing, wondering, are we going to have it? Let's do it. It's the proper thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

We always talk about – this is so funny. I think it was one of the Opposition Members brought up about a road being political and the minister saying no, it's not. But when you're not bringing in the gas tax, but you do it year after year to get a few photo-ops, what is that? It's political, because the gas tax is used to maintain the roads. We all said that. Gas tax, a lot of the money is used to maintain the roads in the province.

So what we're doing, we're keeping people on edge so we could have a press conference, so we can go out and have a media story, here's what we're doing, but we're saying it's not political. It is, definitely, and the only way to make it not political is make it permanent so that everybody in this House will vote for it.

I don't even know if we need a debate. If the government brought in that we're going to permanently put this tax relief in a bill and make it permanent, I don't even know if we'd need a debate. Everybody would just stand up, and I'm sure there's going to be division because everybody in this House wants to say we support it, yet the government won't do it.

I have yet to hear an explanation why they won't. They go year after year after year after year. As the gas tax becomes so personal to so many people that have to drive to work, wants to go up for a doctor's

appointment, wants to do some tourism in the summertime, can they afford it? Can they really afford it?

The big thing that we always lose on the gas tax where it is not permanent, and where we should make it permanent, is groceries – the transportation of groceries in this province. The cost of that is filtered down to the consumer, to the people.

I heard stories here today about where people really can't afford to put gas in their car, and it's true – it is true. I've seen people go to the gas station with \$2, trying to get enough to get home. I've seen it. This is just a part of how government could put it in there. It would be a dead issue because everybody will see the relief year after year. We don't have to come into this House of Assembly and debate this gas tax again and we are going to give relief, which we're going to do every year anyway.

It's all politics. It is. I'm sure if there is anyone who wants to say it's not, stand up and say it's not. Here's an opportunity and let's debate it if you don't think it's politics, because I know it is.

But we have to give confidence to people out there in Newfoundland and Labrador. We got to say, we got your back. By doing this and having a full House of Assembly – how many times were we in this House of Assembly and we say let's show that we got unity in this House? Then we could come in with some issue, the fishery is one that I can remember and a few others that I can mention, that we got unity. Why don't we come in here and show that we got unity on this relief for the gas tax, that we're going to make it permanent for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

It would send a message to all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we hear you, we're with you, we understand what you're doing, we're a part of it and we want to give you some relief and we're going to

make it permanent. This is a great chance for us to stand together.

We all know what's happening with the tariffs in Canada and across the world, we all know that, but it's a good time for us to show unity in the province. There's no better way to show unity in the province than to show the people that we heard you; we know you're hurting; we know that we can do this on a permanent basis so you don't have to worry next year if you can put \$2 in your gas tank. Let's do it. Let's all of us do it.

That would make such a strong statement for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The headlines will be in the media that the House of Assembly came together and they all voted to keep the gas tax relief for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That would be the statement: The whole House of Assembly united. We have the power to do that. We do have the power to do it, but we just won't do it.

So I'm asking the government here today and it's very easy to change this, very easy, to bring in an amendment to this resolution here today, to this bill. Bring it in today, bring it in tomorrow and I can assure you the minister will stand up, probably the Opposition Leader, the Third Party Leader will stand up, have a few words and we'll all vote. We'll have division to show the people that we're with you and it could be done so easy.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I understand the people are saying, well, we got to go through the budget process but when you do it year after year, you know what's going to happen, but you mightn't get your picture taken because you're saying here's what we're doing for the province. That's exactly what it is.

**P. LANE:** Photo-op.

**E. JOYCE:** Photo-op, and everybody knows it. So let's show a bit of unity on that.

I'm going to get on a few things, Mr. Speaker, because gas tax is for the maintenance of the roads. I heard a lot of speakers talking about the road conditions. I can tell you one change that happened, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going back to '89. I'm going back to '99. I'm going back to 2011, 2015, we had it, and I know that some of the past ministers of Transportation and Works knows this.

You used to be able to do a rating system on the roads across the province. You bring them together and when you go out and you do a rating system on what need to be done, they come together and you do on the ranking. Whatever the ranking was, that's what you usually approve, but there's a change been made by this government. It's a change. Do you know what the change is, Mr. Speaker? It's sad –

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

**E. JOYCE:** No, the actual change is that now all the rankings go to Cabinet. So once it goes to Cabinet, the decision is made in Cabinet, you can't get the rankings because they use it for a Cabinet decision. That's exactly what happened.

I went through access to information; you can't get it. That's why people like me, who's been around for a while, who seen the transparency of it all, it goes for the ranking system in the government, it goes to Cabinet. When I put in access to information to get the rankings, they said, you can't; it was a Cabinet document. It was used for a Cabinet decision.

So that's why we see in this province, why we see the discrepancy. That's why you see the Premier with \$29.8 million in one year, because their decisions are made in Cabinet, and it's wrong. If you want openness and transparency for the gas tax to be used for your roads, you would have

no problem saying here's the ranking and we may make some changes into it because it may be some emergency or priority. That's normal. That happens. Or we may need an extra one year and we had to drop off the last four or five of the ranking because we want to finish this project because of necessity. That's all a part of it.

But for years – for years – you could always get the rankings, what the officials out in the department made. You always could get it. Can't get them anymore – can't get them anymore. The other thing that was changed and it changed in the last little while with this government – I don't know who else did it. I used to always go out with the, say, superintendent of Highways in the division and we used to go out and say, okay, let's look at the priorities of the road and pass on my concerns.

That was stopped. You are not allowed to do that any more. So you'd go out with the superintendent and say, look, the people are complaining that this section of the road always washes out because the culvert is dropped. They'd come out and do the inspection. My God, yes, the culvert did drop. That's why we're having it. So we've got to put that on the priority list. It mightn't get done, but at least it's on the list.

Now you don't even know what's on the list – don't even know what's on the list. The director, you can't even get information off anything that the division from out in Deer Lake put in for the District of Humber - Bay of Islands. You can't get it.

I remember I had the media talking about the roads in the Bay of Islands and you want to talk about political. I put in that there was this certain section not being done. That was fine. It was a dangerous situation. It was a gabion basket part. Transportation and Works, at the time, had a tractor parked there for the rocks coming down just to remove them. People were out in the middle of the road removing the rocks. Cars were

hit, yet they said no, we're going to work on it.

So I went out and did a media story and they called Transportation and Works. Transportation and Works, in the media story, said, no, we're waiting for the other infrastructure projects to be finished before we go ahead and release the tender.

I put in an access to information for all the work that's being done in infrastructure – zero, none. They used to put some mix in on the road but the actual infrastructure, none. Four years, none. That's in the access to information.

So you want to talk about politics being played. Those gabion baskets, the tender was released in November. Middle of the winter and couldn't do the work. Still down there and not done; two years. And for the minister's department to say to the media that they're waiting for the infrastructure work to be done, (inaudible) for the gas tax, waiting for the infrastructure work to be done when there's nothing to be done and you're telling me it's not politics? Anybody in this room want to tell me it's not politics, stand up. Anybody? You can't do it. You just can't do it.

The problem I have with it is we're coming in here with the gas tax, the gas tax money used to fix the roads, and it's so political; you're putting people's lives in danger. We heard a lot of cases here this morning about putting cars and the people with the accidents in the cars, hitting potholes that you know that should've been fixed, that were brought to the attention. And people are saying over there, oh well, it's just a pothole.

I'll give you a good example, of course, sometimes when I get a little issue on my mind, I don't usually give it up too easy. I wrote about a lady, same thing, hit a pothole in Mount Moriah and that was fine. I said you have to go through the insurance, write the transportation department and they did,

and they came back and said, no, the department wasn't aware of the issue. She couldn't get it done.

What do I do? I send the minister off seven – seven – pictures of where they had, I think it was nine signs there in the area and they weren't aware of it. Nine. It's: Be careful of potholes. There was a sign right on it. And what happened to the lady is that when she hauled out around, there was another car hauled out coming towards her, had to haul in the middle to get rid of the pothole, she went down into it. The sign was there, but she had to avoid an accident.

But there's nothing done – nothing done. The point I say about this with the minister, with the gas tax for the roads, if you're right and you have nothing to hide, produce the rankings. Produce them.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I can tell you if it's the Liberal government or if it's the PC gets in government, I will be asking to have the rankings –

**P. LANE:** Transparency.

**E. JOYCE:** – transparent, have it transparent.

So at least you know, okay, I have bad roads, but there are a lot worse than me and here's why we made that decision.

If there's one thing I ask the government, and I've seen it so many times, that when you stand up and say all this money is being spent, but how is it being spent? If we're here debating the gas tax money, there's no one can tell me – there's absolutely no one can tell me, I've been around too long for anybody to try to even try to convince me, let alone try to tell me. Even stand up and convince me that the Premier's roads are \$28.9 million and there's not one piece of roadwork in Route 450 or Route 440 for four

years that needed to be done, can't do it. Just can't do it, it's impossible.

When the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board stands up and talks about the gas tax and wants to talk about how some of that money is used for the roads, you're in Cabinet. You may not be affected because you live in the St. John's area, but I can tell you anybody who lives in rural districts will know that when you're hiding the road money, because you want it among your Cabinet, who do we need to get elected, going to help to get road money. When you have roads that people can't afford to fix their cars because of the damage on the roads, there's something fundamentally wrong with the decision that government is making.

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board is bringing in this, states that we're going to have a gas relief again, which I agree with, but it's for the roads of the people of the province, so that we can have safe driving roads and stand in Cabinet and bring up a document that says, okay b'ys let's throw that out, who needs what? That's exactly how it's happening.

I challenge any minister, stand up right now and produce the ranking system; I challenge them, can't do it. It's wrong, it's wrong.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me? I don't know; I can't hear you.

You're agreeing with me, I knew that. She was trying to get it changed.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I say there's a certain minister over there agreeing with it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Can't hear you.

**E. JOYCE:** Well, you can hear me now.

Stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and get it changed. You can hear me now.

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

**E. JOYCE:** For God's sake there's people who can't drive on good roads and yet we don't know how the decisions are being made.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** I don't know how the decisions are being made.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** I can tell you that.

Thank you.

I say to the government Members, anybody can stand up and speak on this. Any of the ministers over there that wants to stand up and say what I'm saying is not true, stand up, simple; they can't because it's sad the way it's happening. It is really sad the way it's happening.

I'm urging the government and if the PC government gets in also, be open and transparent to the people, that's all.

I can tell you right now, any town or anybody that I've ever met with, if you walked in and said face to face, here's why this can't be done and you gave a logical reason, they'll understand. But when you hear the situations around the province that the gas tax is used for roads and when I produce it to a town, \$29.8 million, and they got rocks falling off the cliff and the government is ignoring it, there's something fundamentally wrong.

I urge the minister, if you're really going to bring in this relief for the gas tax which is going to help to maintain the roads, be the leader in Cabinet, as the Deputy Premier, and then bring out the ranking system so people can know how the money is being spent.

I see my time is up, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you very much. I just hope the government, or the PCs, will have open and transparency if they get in the government for this.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** I now call on the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, I just want to speak a little bit on Bill 106, the amendment to the *Revenue Administration Act*.

This amendment is about extending the seven cents per litre tax reduction on gasoline, and for me to speak on this issue is really important because I can tie gasoline to practically everything in my district.

To food: most of the tractor trailers that bring food into Labrador uses diesel but for us in Northern Labrador, we use gasoline for hunting. The cost of the food is really high. I've stood many times in this House of Assembly and spoke to the ministers opposite me to talk about the price of food and how it undermines not only food security in my communities; it undermines our health, our mental health; it undermines opportunities for our youth, for our senior citizens, our elders, for young and growing families, so the price of gasoline is tied to everything in my communities.

Also, heating our homes: For us, the price of oil is so expensive that people have to go out and cut and haul wood to try and heat their homes.

Speaker, that would be okay if everyone had access to a really good snowmobile, a komatik and had the physical ability to haul wood, we would be in wonderful shape – no pun intended. But for us to be able to haul wood, first off, you have to have a good machine and you have to have the physical ability. So that puts our seniors at a disadvantage.

It also puts people with disabilities and medical conditions at a disadvantage and also for people on low income at a disadvantage. So, for us, if we have the ability to haul wood, then we also have to have the ability to afford the gasoline to go into our snowmobiles.

A lot of these things we talk about, like carbon tax, for me, I'm sort of caught between issues. One is global warming and being able to afford gasoline that contributes to global warming. For me, Speaker, everything is relevant and preparing to talk on this bill today, I really didn't even know where to start.

Usually when I speak on something, I always want to talk in the House of Assembly, mostly for the people in my district so they understand what's going on, because what goes on in this House of Assembly can be pretty distracting and also a lot of times it's hard to follow things.

But we're looking at the price of gasoline to go out and haul wood. In Hopedale and Nain, the two largest Inuit communities in Northern Labrador, there's another issue, Speaker, and that issue is the distance they have to travel to get wood. Talking to people in Nain, sometimes they have to travel four hours.

I was over visiting a friend of mine; he is a gentleman and he is starting to get a little bit

older. When he got up to go and make me some tea, his wife told me he has to get up early in the morning because he has to travel so far and he wants to be coming back into the community with his load of wood while it's still daylight. Sometimes he has to get up at 4 in the morning because he needs to travel that distance.

Speaker, when we talk about reducing the tax on gasoline, for us, for me as the MHA, I have to be grateful for a little bit of something – just a little bit of something. Having the seven, eight cents tax reduction on gasoline, that's not much but, for me, I'm glad that my people can access that.

Just like I told the Minister of Finance, when she came up with this \$500 – well, the government proposed this \$500 rebate for people who purchased – what was it, the stove oil, \$500. I said, \$500 – that was first when she introduced it – that wouldn't even buy you a drum of oil. People in Northern Labrador were burning two to four drums a month but, for me, I was grateful to get that \$500 cheque.

The problem in Northern Labrador, the gas stations that sells the oil wasn't producing proper receipts. Speaker, you're aware of some of these situations. People went in and bought 500, 1,000 litres, 500, another 1,000 litres and the receipts that they had was being rejected when they sent them in, because the gas station attendant was handing out the receipts he was given. They were actually photocopies that weren't accepted. So many people in my district actually gave up trying to get that rebate. They really did.

I mean, the Minister of Finance, I respect the fact that this was being made available to us and the circumstances that prevented people in my district from accessing that rebate that everyone else in the province was able to access was because the gas stations weren't producing proper receipts. That's not fair, and we raised that issue time after time.

I spoke to the manager this year of the program and people have given up because they ran into the same problem again: Oh, photocopies. Handwritten receipts that were being rejected.

But for me, looking at the price of gasoline now, in Northern Labrador, we pay \$2.03 a litre for gasoline. That's actually 31.3 cents a litre more than they pay on the Avalon. So Northern Labrador versus the Avalon. But I want to draw attention in this House of Assembly to the difference between how Labradorians are treated and people on the Island.

Looking at this, in Southern Labrador, they're paying, for self-serve, \$1.999 cents; that's \$2 a litre. Just across the Straits, you could almost throw a rock, they're paying \$1.755. So the difference between the southern tip of Labrador and the Northern Peninsula is 24.4 cents a litre. That's the difference.

So the thing about it is for us to be able to access gas to put in our vehicles, to put in our cars, to put in our trucks, to put in our snowmobiles, it's another barrier. It's another cost, because I know in Southern Labrador they've got Elders. I know in Southern Labrador they've got people who are vulnerable. I know in Southern Labrador they've got people on low income. That's a significant cost to living in Labrador and then when you look at what Labrador produces: Muskrat Falls, Upper Churchill, Lab West with the iron ore mines, Northern Labrador with the nickel and all the cobalt. There's been years when Voisey's Bay nickel contributed more to the revenue of the province than the offshore.

When you look at Lab West, the iron ore and the future markets for iron ore, you're looking at another 100 years. I mean, you're looking at hydroelectricity and you're looking at, not only the benefit to the people of the province, but the benefit globally when it comes to hydroelectricity as opposed to the diesel power plants and Holyrood and all

these things, you talk about global warming. So there are many issues, Speaker, and I talk about everything because everything is relative to the price of gasoline in my district.

Another thing I want to point out, too, in Northern Labrador we are all stuck on diesel. I talked about it in the House of Assembly and most of my speech today is for the benefit of the residents in Northern Labrador, my constituents who have elected me twice now. When we talk about the cost of electricity in Northern Labrador, there's a life block of 1,000 kilowatt hours, but Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro doesn't want anyone in my district to be using electric heat.

So what happens is when you go above that life block, the cost per kilowatt hour is 21.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Now everybody here on the Island and in other parts of Labrador – well, on the Island – are really upset because all of a sudden their light bills have gone up and they're wondering how they're going to heat their houses. But for the constituents in my district, the barriers to accessing wood to heat their houses, the huge cost of stove oil to heat their houses. Electricity is not affordable: 21.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

So for us, we've been living the problems that the people on the Island are starting to face. How are you going to heat your house? That's our reality and it impacts not only adults, it impacts our children, it impacts our elders and it cuts through the heart.

To be quite honest, being an MHA for my district, I have two emotions. One is a mixture of pain and despair for what my people are doing through, and the other one is anger because I know the situations could have been fixed years ago.

Even something as positive as the incentive to transition off oil made available to the whole province. We're going to transition

you off your furnace now; we're going to give you – I think first it was \$17,000, now it's up to \$22,000 per household; you're going to have access to mini splits, to heat pumps, very energy efficient. The cost of heating your house is going to go down. But in Northern Labrador, we were not allowed to have access to that incentive, that rebate.

Now there are some people in my communities that actually took on that cost and it was much more than \$20,000 because the cost of getting the technicians in, but we didn't have access to that rebate.

Do you know something? I can stand up any time and speak about the petitions I bring forward. A petition is to bring awareness to the House of Assembly to ask our leaders to advocate on our behalf.

So to have the seven cents off of gasoline is a positive thing and the reason why is because we use gas for everything. We use gas to heat our houses because we burn gasoline in our snowmobiles to haul our wood. We use gasoline to feed ourselves. We put gasoline in our speedboats, our outboard engines, we put it in our snowmobiles so we can go off and hunt. Because in actual fact, we have to live off the land.

Most of the people in Northern Labrador eat more wild game and fish than we do from store-bought.

I have six minutes left. I'll just talk a little bit about the postal strike. The postal strike is relevant to the price of gasoline, it is. In Northern Labrador when we're looking at what we could do in terms of Christmas, Christmas was coming up. The postal strike happened. And then people were saying, well what are we going to give our kids, what are we going to use as presents, because for us in Northern Labrador everything that comes from, say, SportChek, Amazon, Canadian Tire, anything you order, goes into Goose Bay and then is transferred to Canada Post.

One of the pictures that were sent to me and I shared it on social media was a box of chocolates. Twelve single chocolates, 12 chocolates, a box of chocolates in Rigolet, because there's only the Northern store, NorthMart, was the only store operating in Rigolet. For 12 chocolates the price was \$47. It was actually, and I think it was 95 cents. So it was \$48 for a box of 12 chocolates. So if I wanted to give my co-worker a gift Christmastime, was I going to spend 50 bucks?

But I still have time, I still have time to talk, Speaker. Do you know what some people in Rigolet were upset about that, they were a little bit upset with me because I didn't clarify. The price of the chocolates wasn't because of the postal strike. That was the price anyway. And in Rigolet that's the price anyway.

For me when you look at it, last year APTN and CBC did an investigation into Northern stores, NorthMart – I think it's called the North West Company is the parent company across the North. And it was found that there was a lot of gouging. But also, they found that the Nutrition North subsidy that's out there that's put on the cost of shipping nutritious food to the northern communities was being stolen. What it was being is that it wasn't being passed on to the consumers. And they found that the North West Company, Northern and NorthMart was actually pocketing the monies.

Yup, I got it written here. What they found was that Northern stores and NorthMart were only passing on 67 cents out of every dollar for the Nutrition North subsidy.

Speaker, I went on social media, because that's where the controversy was being discussed, and I said it's really hard to hold private companies responsible for the price they charge. If you open up a store, you can charge whatever you want. It's up to the people to go in and buy it. But at the end of the day, companies are not supposed to be

allowed to get away with stealing monies. That's what NorthMart was doing. That's what Northern stores were doing.

If they were not passing on the subsidy but they were pocketing, for their own profit, that's call stealing, Speaker, and that's wrong. The reason why I'm bringing it up now is we've known that for about a year. First, it was in the media, people were talking about it. Then like what happens here in the House of Assembly, things get old, and once the news gets old, nobody seems to care. The problem is still there. It's not fixed, Speaker, but because it's old news now, no one is going to be talking about it, we don't have to do anything about it.

That's about price gouging, robbing Nutrition North subsidies; that's about housing in Northern Labrador. The federal housing advocate came to my district and went and looked at some of the houses and she said that she has nightmares. Join the team, right? Welcome to my world. Also, she used the word – and I like trying to pronounce it because I do have problems with it – she said the conditions were abominable.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's right.

**L. EVANS:** Right. Pretty good, abominable. So where's the big rush now to fix that? That's old news.

When I bring forward my petitions, the ministers have already heard about it so it's old new. The media has heard about it, it's old news. So the problem, with me to stand here day after day to raise the issues, is it's old news and that's relevant to the price of gas so I'm going to say in actual fact, any reduction in the price of gasoline across the province is greatly appreciated, especially in my district, Speaker.

But, at the end of the day, when I ran to be MHA to represent the people in my district, I thought that if I could just get in there and

raise attention so that ministers would understand what was going on, the tremendous hardships, the barriers – and not even talking about the hardships that were forced upon us years ago through colonialism.

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

The hon. Member's time has expired.

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

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

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to get up and speak on Bill 106 for gas tax. It's something I wasn't sure today, when I came in here first, if I'd be speaking on it but just listening when the minister spoke about the maintenance of roads, I certainly had to get up and represent my district in that area for sure.

I'll start with petitions that I've read in this House over the last six years that I've done. Most of mine are from roads, ambulances, breakwater and doctors, but roads being the number one issue for sure. When I first started in here, I had the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde as the minister of Transportation; then I had the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune that's been Transportation minister twice, I think; then the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi was the minister; and now we got the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island and another Member that has passed on since was the minister.

Some of these issues, I've brought up over the years since I've been here and I'll start with Witless Bay Line, which has been completed. It was that bad that somebody had to get out and get it done. That's how bad it was. It made it off the list.

The first minister when I came in here was from Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, he had a five-year roads plan and you sort of had a little bit of expectation that you were going to get something done because it was on a plan, as the Member for – where is he to here?

**L. EVANS:** It changes so much.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah, it changes – well, the Member from up in –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Humber - Bay of Islands.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah, Humber - Bay of Islands, he had spoke about a list.

When you first came in here, you could sort of look at that list. Okay, here's a list; here's where you are. The budget would come out and it would be on the list of where you're to, so hopefully next year it will come off or if you're in here six years, some of it will come off.

Then when a different minister came in, he never went with the five-year road plan; he changed it to something else. He was going to do it differently.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What about the Witless Bay Line?

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Now I just said that it was that bad, you had to do it. That is why I said it was that bad, you had to take it off the list. That's why it's done.

Anyway, the last minister then said he was going to change it and now it's done in Cabinet. Now we don't know where it sits. We don't know where it's going to be.

I'll start with the petition I've done many times in the St. Shott's area that the road is deplorable. It's on Route 10. It's the main road. It's where tourism is at its best in the summer, no doubt about it. They're going around the Irish Loop, the one thing you

hear about and you will hear about it again when June rolls around and July rolls around, they'll be up in St. Vincent's watching the whales and, hopefully, they come from the Placentia West area because their pavement is all done over there. It must have made the list.

They won't come my way. It's not on the main route, but do you know what? It's getting done, and hopefully we can get it done in St. Shott's area. The road is absolutely deplorable. People that are driving motorcycles, the people that got campers, they will come from the Salmonier Line side to go to St. Vincent's to look at the whales. And tourism, that's where it's to up there, for sure, and the road is deplorable.

I can remember two or three years ago I went to Central, out to Exploits, and I stayed for a couple of days. We drove down to a Member's district and I'm looking at him now and I thought I was going to have to take over driving. There was that much pavement down there – he's putting his hands over his eyes. There was that much pavement in the Liberal district, he had to put his hands over his eyes. I thought I was going to have to drive. All in Liberal districts.

Now it's all decided in Cabinet. No one gets to see where it's happening or what kind of rotation it's on. That's just where it's to. It's terrible that it has happened that way – terrible – and we shouldn't be accepting that. That shouldn't be acceptable that it's in there in Cabinet and then they decide where it's going to go. It's not acceptable.

Back to the St. Shott's road, like I said, I've been doing petitions on this for a long time, as you know. The road is not fit to drive on. It's absolutely not fit to drive on, and I dare you to drive up there in the summer to go there. You're on the opposite side of the road more than you're on the right side of the road. That's how bad it is. I am not lying to you. You have to drive it; you have to experience it.

If that's not the worst road in this province, I'd like to see one because that got to be one of the worst. If that's not in the top 10 – it should be done. I'd say they're after spending enough on cold patch up there in the last 10 years to have it paved, and that's a fact. It's unbelievable. Then the plows go in in the winter, it rises up, the plows hits it and it's all full of holes again.

That's just one petition that I've done. That was on the St. Shott's road. Then I got another area close to St. John's down in Petty Harbour, a big tourist area. I would say, and I've said this before, that there are many tourists that travel to Petty Harbour area than any place on this Island. I'd be shocked if it's not. It's just not recorded and I bet you any money. I get so many calls from the people in Petty Harbour - Maddox Cove on this road going from Crocker's Bridge down into Petty Harbour – like, this is gas tax money. This is where, in these areas, you have to go experience it.

I know everybody got roads in their district that are bad, but I am doing petitions on this for five or six years. Last year, they said they were going to do it. The minister was over there now, that's now sitting in the back row, that was going to be done. They were going to have two kilometres road done, not done again.

The problem is I don't know if it's going to be on the list this year or not. We don't know where it sits on the list. That's our problem. I'm trying to report to the people that are asking me. They're sending me emails, finding out where the road is done – can you get something done with this road? Same thing, you drive down to the community, if you drive down there today I bet you any money you're on the opposite side of the road for 0.1 or 0.2 of a kilometre to go around a bad patch of road. These people will tell you. They've been there and they send me emails. The town itself has sent me a letter. I sent it to a former minister who's sitting across here. Sent it to the

minister that was over on the back row now. Still nothing done with it.

We'll go down and do cold patch on it. And cold patch doesn't work. It's a temporary fix and that's what it should be, a temporary fix, until we do the report. But it's not done.

That was another one now. I mean, I've done that petition numerous times. There's a stretch of road that the former minister that's on the back row now drives over every day, and he knows the road from Bay Bulls to the turnaround in St. John's is gouged. The plow goes over it and the plow hits the middle of the road, and where their tires are, the plow is not going to get down there because it's grooved. And it's a big safety issue. It hasn't been touched, and it needs to be done. It's a main route. These are on the main routes. This is the Irish Loop, it's on the main route and it's not done.

There are so many different roads. I've spoken to different ministers over time. There's a culvert in Long Pond, and I won't speak to the minister again on it. But the culvert going from in between Bay Bulls in Long Pond is dropped in the road. You drive out and there's a drop in the road. So a lot of people when they're driving out in the morning – and we know, we drive it and you've seen it. You haul out to go around that hump and I get a lot of complaints, there's a dip in the road.

Now, year over year that culvert in the main road is dropped.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

So that culvert in the main road in Long Pond, we know it's dropped. There has after been people up and look at it. The culvert is

collapsed in underneath. I'm going to tell you, at some point in time when we have one of these one-in-20-year floods or 25-year floods, that that road is going to be shut down. The road is going to be collapsed and we'll have no way to go back and you'll have to over Witless Bay Line to get to St. John's. That's going to happen if they don't do something with it. And they certainly have good road to drive over on Witless Bay Line now, I can tell you that.

But the problem is this is a main thoroughfare, and it's a drop in the road, a big dip. I'm telling you, people send me emails on it. There's a big dip in it and it should be done. The culvert is collapsed underneath. I don't know what more they need. It's not the department's fault. They got to get approval from the government.

One time, the department head or the superintendent of Highways, to a point, they didn't go do pavements, but they had permission to go fix culverts and fix roads without having to go through a department to do it. They had the permission to do it. I'm sure they had the budget. That's all changed. Probably all that's back in Cabinet now too before they get to fix a culvert even. It's impossible. I'm telling you that this road is going to be washed out over a period of time, that culvert is going to collapse and they're going to have to do it.

Now they did do one further up in my district, in La Manche area. That was the same kind of issue. You drive along, there was a big dip in the road. The group that was in Trepassey fixing roads fixed that on the way down and they did a good job on it. But these are serious issues that are main traffic areas that we've been asking about, and we're here talking about gas tax and this is where the money goes, and we certainly are going to approve this, no doubt. We're certainly going to be in favour of this. But we need to look at these areas.

I've made notes here while they were talking. I wasn't going to speak about it this

long. There's a culvert in Brigus that is three-quarters full of stone, coming from the ocean and where the people are, and they're (inaudible) after me, and they'll send me a letter the last two or three years. I can only ask the government. They're the ones that are responsible. All I can tell them is that I'm not responsible.

I'll certainly pose it to them. I bought it to every minister that's been here, and I don't have it fixed yet. I'm going to keep after it and hopefully it'll get done, but they know that they can't do it with the Department of Highways equipment. They can't do it. They've got to tender it out to a contractor that can do it properly. But it should be done. I mean, it's a safety issue. The families down below could get blocked off, and it's going to happen. It's going to happen for sure.

We're talking about gas tax, again, as I've said, and bringing up 24-hour snow clearing. No doubt, we're struck right now with tariffs and we don't know where to go and you've got \$200 million set aside for what could happen with that. Two million dollars is what was in the budget, or \$1.6 million at the time, when they shut down the 24-hour snow clearing, and they can't have \$2 million. You talk about money like it's nothing – \$200 million now, that's what we laid aside for tariffs.

You've got \$2 million for 24-hour snow clearing, for the safety of the people that are travelling to work, and that's very important. You've got doctors that are going in in the mornings; you've got nurses that are going in; you've got police officers that are trying to get to work as well. These are all for safety of all the general public of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we've shut down the 24-hour snow clearing.

We've had people who've drove across this Island, and ministers and MHAs have driven in here and saying that that they're not on the highways, they're not on the roads in

certain hours of the night. That should not happen – that should not happen.

Okay, they don't have to work 24 hours today if there's no snow in the forecast. But they know if snow is coming and tomorrow night we're having a storm. Most times, they're pretty well on target with their forecast now and if it's going to start at 12, they're not very far off. So at 1, they should be out getting ready to clear those roads. These people have to get ready to go to work. I mean that's the logic in it, they have to get ready to go to work. They say, well, we come in at 5. They come in at 5. Well, they have 2½ half hours of roads to clean for the first trip around. So there's a road that's there that's not going to be cleared in two to 2½ hours, so they're really not cleared until 7:30, if you're starting at 5. So there's the logic in 24-hour snow clearing.

Us as a PC government, when we form government, we're bringing that back in, I can guarantee you that.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Speaker, there are some other issues, again, with roads. I said I'd touch on some of the petitions; brush cutting is the same thing. It is a safety issue. It's going to maintenance of roads, safety issue, no question about it. I have been at that for a long time. Again, somebody else spoke about a tender came out in October and it's still not done.

There are so many other petitions that I've had over the years. Again, I touched on brush cutting. I touched down in Petty Harbour. I touched in Bay Bulls. I've touched off in St. Shotts. There are other roads in the Local Service Districts, in the areas that they don't have councils to represent them. The government should be out looking at these. Where is the list to say where they sit on the list if they're going to be done?

I have places in Mobile. I have a place in Calvert the other night that somebody had mentioned to me that if they don't soon go down and fix the road in Calvert where the water comes in, where the fish plant is now going down there, there will be no road to go down to. There was armour stone along the front of that and he told me 30 or 40 years ago, there was a vegetable garden and that's all gone with coastal erosion, but the road is right there and that is going to be shut off is somebody don't do something about it.

You can go up there and you can mention to the Department of Highways. They still have to go back and see the department to get approval to do it. It's the same thing again; that's going to be shut off at some point in time.

I am certainly glad to be able to get up here and represent the district, and these are some of the issues that I've been at since 2019 and some of them have been accomplished, I'll certainly do say that, but there are so many more to do. Again, all we'd look for is to see where they stand to on the list. That's what we'd like to see.

He's not wrong. If you don't want to see that or if you don't want to produce it, that's incredible to not know where we stand here and where our roads stand and what position they're in. That was here when we first started. We knew that they were sort of on a list to when it's going to be done. Right now, we have no idea. It's time to take that out of Cabinet, put it back where people can see it so we can have a list and be able to get back to the people who we represent to let them know where they stand in their districts.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's always an honour, again, to stand in this hon. House and bring the concerns of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue forward. As the previous speaker, my colleague from Ferryland, had said about all the pavement in Placentia West, I'd be remiss if I didn't correct him to say that he's talking about Placentia - St. Mary's because they did get a lot of pavement.

But I have such a big district that I really can't complain because we have been getting some things done and a lot of it this year was due to the twinning of the highway, which I will commend that it's probably long overdue, but glad to see it finally show up. When we look at a gas tax, and that's what we're here to discuss and debate this morning, it's about the choices and the priorities that we have and making our roads good and driveable and safe is important.

We obviously have to take care of the trunk first, which is Route 1, Trans-Canada Highway. But also in my district, I have the lion's share of the Burin Peninsula Highway, which goes from Route 210, it goes from Goobies to Marystown. Consequently, myself and my colleague from the Burin - Grand Bank District have worked on a few things and a few initiatives together. We're dealing right now with something that was kind of thrown at us with the Red Harbour West bridge because we're down to one lane on it and if we go down to no lanes, then the whole Burin Peninsula is cut off and we're back to using coastal boats to get supplies down to the Burin Peninsula.

Like I said, when we make these priorities a part of our budgetary process, and we make it that we're drawing money from implementations of stuff like gas tax and stuff like that, well, that is important to have that money in the coffers. The impacts really are on our working class and our blue-collared workers. They're going to work every day. They're packing their lunch,

which is impacted by, as my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay said, with the distribution and transportation costs. So they get hit with the gas tax on several different implementations, but they're the ones that are keeping our economy going, Speaker. They're the ones that we relied on during COVID to get the essential services delivered and keep the lights on and stuff like that.

We need to look at when we implement a tax, who does it impact the most because, obviously, a gas tax wouldn't impact, necessarily, or very heavily, somebody that doesn't own a car that's a combustion engine. As my colleague from Torngat Mountains said, people lose sight of the fact that gasoline is very essential to many different cultures for the simple fact that lots of people in my district using chainsaws and hunting and doing subsistence life off the land and good on them because it's helping with their budget and stuff like that. You know, there are a lot of people out there that, I guess, they're trying to keep the wolf from the door. So having that cache of meat, I guess, kind of thing during the winter or fish or what have you, it kind of helps that you only need then the things that go with those meals. So whether it's our root vegetables or anything like that.

Like I said, it's about decisions but the impacts that a gas tax has on our working class is astronomical because they get hit with it so many different times in so many different avenues.

I think it's unfortunate that we look at a gas tax as something being the lowest in the country because while that's something to pound your chest on or put our nose in the air at, the thing is that it's still money that's coming out of people's pockets. It's still like this hidden agenda type of thing.

For me the whole thing about having this gas tax, it should be relaxed to zero. That would be something to be proud of. I would let anybody beat their chest if they brought it

back from seven cents to zero cents. I mean that would make sense.

With that being said, we're talking about the general coffers, or does it go to a dedicated file that we look at what the gas tax is supposed to impact the most. Is it brush cutting because when we sit up here and we talk about over \$200 million in the budget for roads and we leave the brush cutting budget at \$2 million. There's more than \$2 million after being spent in my district on brush cutting this year just for the twinning of the highway. It is a great job. I mean, there was a couple of safety concerns with large chunks of wood flying onto the highway and hitting cars, but that's insurance stuff. That's got nothing to do with government.

I think it's important that we get that done because, like I said, that is going to help tremendously with the safety of the people that – everybody has to drive through my district. I always torment my colleagues when we're coming back to the House of Assembly, to make sure that they have their passports stamped when they get to Goobies and travel through to Whitbourne where my district ends, about seven kilometres outside of Whitbourne.

Yes, it's impacting everybody in my district but especially the working class. We're a very industrial district, so the impacts of seven cents on gas, is tremendous. Especially when it comes to our contractors that are working out of the refinery, when it comes to –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order please,

It's becoming very difficult to hear the Member speaking. I ask Members to lower the volume.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

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

I appreciate that because anything that we talk about here in the House, I think that's the level of respect that we need to show each other that we're listening, because this is the people's House. What we need to do, first and foremost, is listen to the people. What I'm doing right now is bringing the people's voice of Placentia West - Bellevue forward. I think it would be incumbent on the government to pay attention because while we don't get invited to meetings to assist in the think tank kind of thing because they have all the answers over there and that's probably why they don't listen. But with that being said, I think the thing is that we want to collaborate with our government because we want what's best for the province and the people that we all represent.

That's the whole point of it. There's no one person from the tip of Labrador to Port aux Basques and Cape Race, everybody's the same, everybody is equal, let's make it that way.

The people who are coming here and immigrating to Newfoundland and Labrador, they're loving the life that they found here; they didn't realize this diamond in the rough even existed. It's about making sure that the cost of living is reasonable so that we can attract people to come here. But if we're going to pay the same cost of living as you're paying in Toronto or Vancouver or anything like that, you may as well just live in Toronto or Vancouver, because that's where they're going to get the services. A lot of the services here in Newfoundland and Labrador are concentrated in the metro St. John's area, when it comes to hospitals and stuff like that.

The diversions from the Clarenville hospital are impacting my residents as well, big time. That's what we're trying to bring to light is that this needs to be a stronger focus so that any monies that we're collecting, like the gas tax, can impact the eventuality that people are getting the care that they

deserve, where they deserve it and where they want it. That was the whole point of the Greene report, to have a look at our health and stuff like that in order to make better outcomes and to get better outcomes.

I agree with that but when we make our priorities such that it's about collecting money as opposed to improving services, then we've missed the boat. That's the whole point that I'm trying to make. We're missing the boat on what collecting taxes should be. Government only has two choices when collecting taxes. They can spend or save.

Right now, I mean, you know, I still think it's really funny and laughable and backward, as far as I'm concerned, that we're borrowing money for a Future Fund that we're paying interest on. I've said it in this House before and I'll say it again: I am not going to the bank this evening with my credit card and asking them to open me a savings account. I can't do that.

So when we collect the gas tax and we have decisions to make with the money that is collected from gas tax, these are the types of decisions that impact everybody so therefore we need to utilize the money that's being collected or get rid of it. It's seven cents that is impacting every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

One of the other things that I think that when we talk about priorities and stuff like that, that seven cents is impacting our government as well and our public service. Look at all our vehicles that we have to gas up on a daily basis for snow clearing, for our police forces, for our ambulances, for everything that impacts each and every individual in Newfoundland and Labrador. If we take that seven cents off, that's money in the bank again.

So instead of spending, we're saving and then we have that eventuality to spend after that once we collect it. The whole point of everything we do has something to do with

travelling or moving. As long as we're moving people, the gas tax is going to impact everything that they do because moving people, nine times out of 10, you're getting in a combustion vehicle, whether it's a bus, a truck, a car, even a boat for that matter, using chainsaws to get warmth for your family in the winter because you can't afford electricity or anything like that.

When we talk about going from oil to electric and we're going into a green economy and stuff like that, it's incumbent that we understand that this is not, like, a light-switch moment. We don't just go over and change the whole economy by flicking a light switch. It's about the transition into a green economy. We want to get there. We are going to get there.

But we think that we could have a bigger impact on the world by developing our oil and gas in order to – you know, I've talked to the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology just yesterday and we were talking about different implementations. I said if we wanted to change the economy right now of Newfoundland and Labrador, we would switch everybody over to natural gas because we've got more cubic metres of natural gas off our shores than we've got oil. The fortunate part about oil is that we know how to capture it and we know how to resell it. That's been going on in the world for quite some time.

Our oil has 30 to 50 per cent less hydrocarbons, which I know it's a wrong way of saying it and saying that it's greener than anything else, because that's obviously a little bit of an oxymoron. But with that being said, if we have 30 to 50 per cent less hydrocarbons than anywhere else in the world – and we're talking about Saudi Arabia is leading the world with oil sales, Russia is leading the world with oil sales, even Alberta, here in our own country. But none of them have the product that we have and we need to utilize that to the benefit of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Maybe then we can get rid of gas tax for the simple fact that we have built our coffers; we have changed around our economy for the better. Because taxation, really, is an easy way out for government to garner money to make budgets and to be able to afford to keep the lights on, we'll say.

But, with all that being said, we need to turn around the economy. We need to get a full-time tenant or a sale of the Bull Arm site. I think that would be important. Upon understanding a little bit more about our Bull Arm site, I think that it would be a great investment for our government, or for whoever's making a proposal for Bull Arm, that they look into producing and implementing these locks. What the locks would do, is that they would cut off the ocean, I guess, kind of thing, and you pump out the water and you end up making a dry dock out of the facility that you have here.

Bull Arm was direct into the Jeanne d'Arc Basin; it's a very attractive site. I know that the minister is doing good work, and we've had some very fulsome conversations about Bull Arm and the impact that it has sitting idle and the impact that it would have by being developed or being sold to somebody who was planning on developing it.

It's a world-class facility that was built by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It needs to be considered an asset. It can't be looked at as a liability anymore and maybe that means that we need to do something else down there that makes it a world-class facility again that's being utilized.

Like I said, if we're going to collect gas tax, then that's one place that's really impacted by that. All of our tradespeople, that built Bull Arm and has built the West White Rose, hopefully we can get more work at Kiewit down in Marystown. With all that being said, it's our oil and gas that has kind of given us a new way of life but we can't overtax it so that it goes away.

Is this the reason why Equinor put a pause on their operations for three years? Hopefully this May is the time that they come back and they look at their exploration and development of the basins that they have explored off our coast and make it a benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our gas tax impacts everybody in the province. There's nobody that's not impacted by the seven cents. I would talk about the five cents that was on for the sale at Braya, but that seems to be a moot point at this point. Nobody seems to be listening about that. The refinery has been bought and sold and you never know, it could be back up for sale again any time soon because of the subsidies not coming out of California.

In the meantime, the gas tax, federally, is something that's been helping communities and building extra infrastructure. But to say that it's a good implement at this time, it is certainly not a good implement. People are overburdened with taxes. People –

**P. PARSONS:** We have the lowest cost of living in Canada and the best province (inaudible).

**J. DWYER:** Well, we might have the lowest cost of living in Canada, I say to the Member opposite and you can get up –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DWYER:** You can get up and speak for 10 minutes or 20 minutes if you want because I haven't seen you get up this week at all, but you have a lot of chirping going on.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DWYER:** Anyway, if I could utilize your protection there, Speaker, from the chirp, I'd appreciate it.

When we look at gas tax and how it impacts our government vehicles, when we talk about our snow clearing and stuff like that, there have been times where I've gotten calls from communities, that it's 1 or 2 in the afternoon before they even seen a snow flyer.

I understand the whole point about the buses and stuff like that but, with all that being said, I don't understand how the schedule got put off, because I wasn't getting those calls last year. There's been retired snow clearing operators that have come back to work after retirement because we're short of operators. We know that mechanics are a big issue. How is the seven cents on gas impacting all of that? Why are we not utilizing the things that we are capturing gas tax from – how come that money is not going back into those things?

We were promised all these flyers and came up very short on delivery. Again, that impacts every district and every person in the province. So, like I said, if we were going to collect and capture a tax, then instead of putting it into general coffers, maybe it's time that we actually nail down what it's being utilized for so that the people understand why their pockets are being robbed.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now stand in recess until 2 p.m.

**SPEAKER:** You need to adjourn debate on the bill right now.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, let's try again.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier and President of Treasury Board, that we now adjourn debate on Bill 106.

**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:** I move that this House do now stand in recess until 2 p.m., and that is seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

**SPEAKER:** This House do stand recessed until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit visitors.

Before we begin, I'd like to welcome a father-daughter team here today.

Sabrina, here to my right, is actually the daughter of our Sergeant-at-Arms, Robert Escott.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl North, Placentia - St. Mary's, Placentia West - Bellevue and Exploits.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

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

Speaker, Colin Furlong grew up in my District of Mount Pearl North. Right from the early years, he performed in many high school productions, including musicals.

He is now a well-respected actor who has spent the last 20 years on stage and screen across our province and beyond. Colin has spent multiple seasons at the Rising Tide Theatre in Trinity, the Gros Morne Theatre Festival in Cow Head, the theatre in Conception Harbour, and he has appeared in countless shows at the LSPU Hall and the Arts and Culture Centre across the province over the last two decades.

He is well known for his performance of Joey Smallwood in the one-man show, *The Only Living Father*.

Colin's work has been on stage throughout Canada and the UK, as well as on screen all over the globe. His film and television appearance includes feature films such as *Sweet Angel Baby*, *Merry Mystery Christmas*, the *Hudson & Rex* show, *Republic of Doyle* and he can currently be seen delivering the news on the CBC's *Son of a Critch*.

What a talented and hard-working, young man we have right here in our community.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulations to Colin and good luck in his new adventures.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Anita O'Keefe of Great Barasway has been an outstanding volunteer for over

40 years. This lady has demonstrated dedication, compassion and commitment to the education of community about its rich heritage and culture.

Her passion for preserving and sharing history has touched countless lives. She has been a leader in organizing educational programs, guiding historical tours and ensuring that a connection to cultural roots is maintained. She has helped foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the traditions and values that define our community.

Approaching every task, no matter how large or small, with enthusiasm and a sense of purpose. Her ability to connect with people, engage them in learning and leave a lasting impression speaks volumes about her character and her passion for service. Her volunteerism will leave a legacy, as her efforts have protected our cultural history, and in doing so, she has ensured that future generations will have the opportunity to appreciate and understand the richness of heritage.

Speaker, as we approach International Women's Day, I would like to highlight this outstanding woman in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's. Please join me as I thank Anita O'Keefe for her contribution to the preservation of history.

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

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

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

Speaker, today I rise in this hon. House to recognize a dedicated and decorated athlete who started her journey in Marystown, Newfoundland, in the District of Placentia West- Bellevue, Miss Kaetlyn Osmond.

She is Canada's most decorated female singles skater with three Olympic medals,

two world championship medals, one Grand Prix final medal, six Canadian championship medals and one World Team trophy. She has won gold at the national championships three times and the world championships once.

In 2018, she was honoured with the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as having a highway in my district, from Red Harbour to Marystown, renamed Osmond Way.

Since retiring from competitive skating in 2019, Kaetlyn has toured internationally with shows such as Stars on Ice, Rock the Rink and Art on Ice. She served as the official athlete ambassador for the national championships and, today, she is coaching in Alberta.

Most recently, Kaetlyn has been inducted into the Skate Canada Hall of Fame, who celebrates the achievements of athletes who have shaped Canadian figure skating, and that is exactly what Kaetlyn Osmond of Marystown has done.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Kaetlyn Osmond on this most prestigious achievement.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Today I would like to recognize a fellow Lion, Harold Rideout, of the Bishop's Falls Lions Club. This fall, Harold received the Melvin Jones Award – the highest award bestowed upon a Lion's member.

Harold has been a member of the club for 48 years. In this time, he has served as president and been involved in many committees and chair of the fundraising

committee. For the past 35 years, Harold has served as treasurer of the club, a position which he still holds today.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Lion Harold on receiving the Melvin Jones Award and thank him for his continued volunteer service.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to highlight how our government is breaking down barriers for young Labrador athletes, Special Olympians and sports teams for travel to participate in provincial sporting events.

2025 is the Year of Sport and it's an important reminder to us all that encouraging and promoting physical activity at an early age improves self-esteem, well-being, mental health benefits, boosts confidence, improve social skills and a host of other benefits, Speaker.

It's important to ensure all youth, regardless of where they live, have access to sport. The most recent enhancements to the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy program, no pun intended, but it levels the playing field for Labrador youth living in isolated communities along the North Coast, providing individual athletes 100 per cent airfare coverage to Goose Bay Airport. That's just one of the ways this sport travel subsidy supports young athletes who live in Labrador.

Speaker, last year we provided 100 individual grants and 55 team grants and I'm confident that this year we may even surpass those numbers.

I truly believe that sport is often the guiding light toward success for young people in our province and I am proud to stand today and reaffirm our government's commitment to helping the young athletes across the Big Land.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

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

Anything that will help my constituents and Labradorians to be able to access the same events and competitions as the rest of the province, I applaud. We must recognize that these measures, though beneficial, are not sufficient to meet the growing needs of our talented youth. This year, designated as the Year of Sport, reminds us that participation in athletics is not merely about competition. It's crucial for personal development, self-esteem and overall well-being. While it's important that athletes from Northern Labrador isolated communities can now travel to Goose Bay, we must address the significant financial barriers that still exist for those who excel at higher levels, like the Canada Games and provincial teams.

Labradorians, Labrador athletes, alongside their families often face daunting tasks of fundraising to cover travel expenses which can be prohibitively high. No determined skilled athlete should be sidelined due to financial constraints.

The best athlete often never made the team.

We need to do more to ensure that every youth with the skilled drive and determination has access to the opportunities they deserve. Supporting our young athletes is an investment in their future fostering resilience, teamwork and leadership skills that will benefit not only them but our communities as a whole.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

We commend government's commitment to ensure that more Labrador youth can take part in competitions and show their skills to the rest of the province, country and beyond; however, the job is not done. Travel to and from Labrador is still extremely expensive. Theatre groups, youth parliament, arts and other youth programs still can't join events on the Island because of the prohibitive cost.

We call upon government to double down your efforts to bring down costs and level the playing field for all Labradorians, especially our youth.

Thank you.

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

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

Speaker, I wish to acknowledge March as Pharmacy Appreciation Month.

Pharmacy Appreciation Month is a time to highlight the importance of pharmacy professionals and to thank them for their extraordinary efforts. Whether working as part of a clinical team at one of our hospitals or within a community pharmacy, they are an integral part of the delivery of health care. They ensure that patients get the most appropriate medication, manage drug interactions, assess and prescribe for many common conditions, provide knowledge of over-the-counter products, train patients on medical devices and administer many vaccinations.

We continue to work with the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador to create more efficient health care by increasing services available at community pharmacies, thereby reducing the number of people needing hospitalization and visiting emergency rooms.

Today, pharmacists have a greater scope of practice and more autonomy than ever before. As we work to transform health care, we're tremendously grateful for pharmacy professionals and their dedication to the well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking pharmacy professionals for their unwavering dedication, care and compassion.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, whichever minister that may be, but today we got the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

Speaker, the Official Opposition caucus extends a very sincere thank you to the many people working in our pharmacies, they are key to our overall health. Whether it be the pharmacy assistants, technicians or the pharmacists themselves, they work tirelessly in a field facing immense vacancy challenges.

Often, pharmacies are the first place for someone seeking medical help or advice. Beyond their role of ensuring safe distribution of medications, they also serve to help ensure timely access to health care, preventing the need for many people to seek or visit the ER.

But, Speaker, while more than 100,000 Newfoundlanders or Labradorians have no family physician, pharmacists are eager to help bridge the gap further. We welcomed the scope of practice expansion for pharmacists two years ago, but we've been waiting for government to make smart decisions to expand it further, but they are silent.

Pharmacists are one of the several health care professionals who are not being used effectively to manage the crisis we face, despite being extremely well equipped to contribute; a crisis that is not new to this Liberal government despite ignoring clear solutions.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

We, too, would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the pharmacists who keep us well. It's unfortunate that some in

our communities can't afford to avail of their services.

That's why we ask, once again, to call on this government to follow Manitoba's lead and sign a deal with the federal government to start building a pharmacare program for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance in Interim Supply indicated that \$200 million has been set aside to deal with potential issues around the tariffs. We know that the fishery is a vital part of our economy.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Can you tell the plant workers, the harvesters and the producers exactly how much of the \$200 million that she announced has been allocated to the fishery?

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

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

I'm glad the Official Opposition has allowed us to answer questions today on the tariffs.

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

**S. COADY:** A very serious issue impacting not only the fishery but many of our workers, many of our businesses and, indeed, all of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the most serious issue facing the day. In fact, it is our sovereignty as a country, Speaker, that we're actually talking about.

We know that the President of the United States has often talked about annexing Canada, and this is a very serious issue so I'm glad the Member opposite actually asked a question about this today.

We spent some five hours in this House yesterday talking about Interim Supply and we did not spend very much time talking about that \$200 million.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, this is the second day since the tariffs have been implemented by the United States of America on Canada and this province, yet the Minister of Finance had 30 days that they were postponed for in order to develop a clear plan on what exact actions they were going to take. Yet, we stand up today and instead of getting some kind of direction on exactly what the province has planned, we get nothing more than rhetoric.

So let me be clear: People of the Province of Newfoundland are suffering tremendously with the cost of living in this province.

Let me ask the Minister of Finance: Now that the architect of the sugar tax has resigned, will you eliminate the sugar tax to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

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

The Leader of the Opposition takes advantage of a circumstance. Not only did

he fail to ask a question on tariffs on the day of the tariffs, but this is the first time that the Opposition has asked a question on the fishery since July of 2024.

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

**G. BYRNE:** He's done well by raising the profile, so I appreciate and thank him for doing so. What I'll say to the hon. Member is we are working very, very constructively with Ottawa. He will be the first to say, if he is truthful, that he has any knowledge of the fishery. Ottawa does have a role to play in supporting plant workers with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to be able to say to this House and to our plant workers, to our industry and to our province, I'll be meeting the federal ministers very, very shortly to engage in a plan to make sure that we are ready when the fishery opens.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, let me ask the question again.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are already struggling with the high cost of living. This government implemented a sugar tax. The minister has an opportunity.

Will the Minister of Finance eliminate the sugar tax?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, yesterday we spent almost five hours in this House talking about Interim Supply – s speaking for almost five hours on Interim Supply. What was contained within that Interim Supply was –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** – \$200 million to address the concerns of the people of this province around tariffs. We have the fishing industry that's concerned; the oil and gas industry that's concerned; the mining industry that's concerned.

I can keep going, Speaker, but I will say this. They didn't ask questions about that \$200 million last night. All they did was hold up Interim Supply so that we –

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

**SPEAKER:** One second.

Order, please!

The minister is standing right in front of me. I can barely hear her speak.

You have 10 more seconds.

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

**S. COADY:** There are important issues that we need to address in these tariffs, that \$200 million will help us with supports to the people of this province. I hope they (inaudible).

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I'll ask the question again.

Will the Minister of Finance finally eliminate the unnecessary sugar tax that's hurting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

**S. COADY:** Do you know what's hurting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker? Do you know what's hurting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? That the Opposition is not focused on the single most important issue that is before the people of this province: the impacts to workers, the impacts to businesses –

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

**S. COADY:** – the impacts to communities, the impacts to everyday families. Every single day when people go to the stores, they're going to be faced with these tariffs and the counter tariffs that are required because of it.

We're focused on the supports that are going to be needed by industries, the supports that are going to be needed by the fishery, the supports that are going to be needed by people. Access to new markets – they haven't asked any questions about access to new markets. They haven't asked any questions about internal trade. They haven't asked any questions about really the plan that we have been putting together with community groups, with business groups, with unions over the last month and a half.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, it is disappointing to hear that from the Liberal government opposite that people who have been suffering through a cost-of-living crisis in this province, that people who are being denied access to health care on a timely basis, no longer matter. They no longer matter to this Liberal government.

Well, I'm sorry, I'm going to still stand up and talk about people who can't access health care. I'm going to still stand up and talk about people –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – and the cost of living, because that's exactly what's happening and this will only add to it.

Speaker, I have written the federal transport minister asking for relief on Marine Atlantic rates to help reduce the cost of food and medication coming into this province.

Will the Liberals join me in calling on their federal cousins to take action?

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

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

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

I would thank the hon. Member opposite for that very, very, very important question, one that myself and my colleague from Burgeo - La Poile have been on for a very long time. I've sat down on multiple occasions, not only with the federal minister of Transportation but also the federal minister of Tourism, because this is a very important issue as well for the tourism industry in our province, Mr. Speaker, we have access challenges.

But, Mr. Speaker, 100 per cent, we have reached out to the federal minister of Transportation. This is extremely, extremely important in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'll speak for a moment particularly about the tourism industry. You know, we need to look at growing the industry now within Canada. We need more access. We need more capacity and we will continue to lobby Marine Atlantic for just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his answer –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – because like him, I believe that the tourism industry is a megaproject – it is a renewable megaproject for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It brings in new money every single year, so I applaud the fact that they've already written the minister about this issue and we will work to make sure that this gets addressed.

Now I would like to go back and ask about one more measure that could be done immediately to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, I ask the minister: Will you finally cover the costs of nurse practitioner visits so that residents could keep more money in their pockets?

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

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

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

Nurse practitioners play a crucial role in the delivery of primary health care across this province, and I'd like to say thank you to every one of them while I'm on my feet here.

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

**J. HAGGIE:** I haven't had the chance for a while.

We want a publicly funded system. Fee for service does not work for primary care; it does not work for primary care physicians. I

do not propose to have anything to do with it when it comes to nurse practitioners either.

Thank you.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Again, Speaker, we hear another minister being dismissive about the concerns of people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are struggling to access primary care physicians and have to pay to see a nurse practitioner.

While he doesn't recognize it, the federal government, his own cousins, have recognized it, that's going to be part of the health transfers as of April 1, 2026.

So I say: Why wait until April of 2026? Let's do it now. Let's make nurse practitioners part of this program and allow people not to have to pay to see a nurse practitioner.

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

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

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

We have taken steps to enhance primary care in this province. The number of people connected to Family Care Teams has gone up significantly from thirty-odd-thousand to over 73,000. These people now have access to primary where once they did not.

Is the job done? No, it isn't. But in concert with my colleague from Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, her programs have put through over 1,000 health care employees in 2024. We have 1,133 nurses. We have 761 RNs. We have over 140 more physicians in this province than we had 18 months ago.

We're getting there, Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, what we do have is hundreds of people, including seniors, forced to pay to see a primary care provider because this government can't figure out a way to pay nurse practitioners for their services. That's what we have in this province.

Speaker, people across our province are being hit by high power bills that seem way out of line with actual usage. I have written the PUB asking them to investigate.

Will the Liberal's also send a letter and encourage the PUB to investigate?

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

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

I'm going to rise to deal with the preamble. Any nurse practitioner in this province who wants a job with NLHS can have one tomorrow; call me.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** The nurse practitioners want the ability to practice and bill the government as we have long argued. I think it's only reasonable. You want to take the pressure off our health care system and our family doctor shortage, and it makes perfect sense, but government for some reason refuses to listen because I think they think it's our idea.

Speaker, the Deputy Premier to say health care is not the number one issue facing the

people of this province, the tariffs are, I beg to differ. She needs to go out and talk to the people in the emergency rooms and the hospital rooms. I got personal stories; my inbox is full of them.

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

**B. PETTEN:** It's shameful for the Deputy Premier to make that statement to the House. That's absolutely shameful.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what US-based health care contracts have been replaced with Canadian vendors so far?

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

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

I would actually take issue with the preamble to that. I have had seniors crying in Dominion in front of me, not concerned about health care, but worried about where the world is going, where the tariffs are and what is going to happen to us.

That is their single most common question: What is going to happen to us? How are we going to cope? Yesterday, I got up in this House and talked about Interim Supply. I talked about the contingency fund that they didn't want. They expect us to be able to plan this when the guy down there is nuts.

It's random, chaotic activity and you cannot plan for chaos. You can list contingencies; we have done that. We need a pot to deal with them and we need the flexibility within that to do it. They don't want it.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** What US-based health care contracts have been replaced with Canadian vendors so far?

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

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

I have a letter to the CEO of NLHS asking him to look at those procurements that we make which involve products that come from the United States. It is not immediately obviously how rapidly we can get away from some of these because they are highly specialized and very difficult to replace: for example, the TAVI implants and those kind of things and prostheses in cardiac surgery. However, they have been directed to look at the impacts and wherever possible source elsewhere. As to the exact number, I don't have it. Happy to find it for you.

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

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

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

I would appreciate if the minister could table that letter.

You know, Speaker, while I appreciate the symbolism of Jack Daniels being pulled off the liquor store shelves, the dollar value is actually minute.

Has the government replaced the \$22-million contract with Teladoc?

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

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

I refer to my previous answer. I have directed the CEO of NLHS to look at all procurement that is done and to see and identify products that are made or come from US suppliers and look at alternatives. That will take some time to do and has begun, in actual fact.

However, a lot of our procurement, particularly for routine inventory, comes through contracts which are across Atlantic Canada through an organization called HealthPRO. That is tangly; we went through this with COVID. We have companies in the province that can make gloves and protective personal equipment as we went through, we built that capacity in COVID. What we need to do now is to reactivate that and we're working on that, too.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I sure hope that letter was wrote at least 30 days back. This is not a new issue yesterday. I hope they never wrote the letter yesterday. It was only paused for 30 days. This is not a new issue, Speaker, but I'd like to see when the letter was actually written and sent out. I'd really like to see that.

Speaker, when this contract was awarded a Newfoundland company spoke out saying they could have provided the service which is \$3.5 million a year and why, Speaker, are we still sending millions of dollars to the United States?

I would like to see when the letter was written because I sure hope it wasn't yesterday. That Teladoc is still being paid by American doctors. It should be replaced.

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

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

I was not in this role 48 hours ago. In terms of my answers to the questions about US procurement, I can do no better than repeat them. We have directed the CEO of NLHS

and they have been working to look at what it is we get from the US, how we can replace it and quite frankly we are going to end up with some things that are not replaceable in the immediate, medium term from anywhere else, but we are looking at it. In terms of contracts and the date that the Member opposite has asked for, I'll get that for him.

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

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

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

Speaker, my quick question is: When was it done? Who done it? Simple question, if he never, his predecessor. We don't know if it was the predecessor, the guy that's on holidays, who done it and when was it done?

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

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

As to what the department has done prior to my arrival there, I will look into it, and I will let the Member opposite know.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Yesterday I attended the press conference that was held by the Minister of Fisheries, and I went there with the intent of understanding what the plan was over the last 30 days for our fishing industry. I stated in the House yesterday, we talked tariffs, and we talked fishery and stated that there was no plan. The plant in Bonavista has 400

locals at work. It puts in \$350,000 in payroll each week to the economy in Bonavista. Needless to say, the fishery is very significant for this province.

I would ask the minister if he can share some substance from your planning to provide some degree of comfort for the start-up of this season.

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

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

I welcome the hon. Member for his first question on fisheries matters since last year.

Perhaps the hon. Member was at a different press conference. He might have been at a different one that he's alluding to, may have been confused because I clearly outlined that Newfoundland and Labrador was the very first jurisdiction, place in Canada to be able to provide specific supports for diversification to our fishing industry when other provinces were considering or even, it was a germ of an idea with other provinces, we were acting on it. I specifically said we would put forward additional funds for retooling plants to look at new markets. I specifically outlined trade missions and trade initiatives that would bolster our diversification efforts. What I heard from the hon. Member, however, is that the plan from the PCs is to actually subsidize American consumers buying crab from Newfoundland and Labrador. That's just not on, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, I was at the conference he knows well. And I asked the minister to stick around while I spoke to the media as well. There's a lot of risk involved with going forward. People are uncertain. They need certainty. They need a degree of certainty going forward.

The diversification – the minister can admit that we're not going to diversify our snow crab market for next month. We know that.

I am asking him what situations in the fishery would lead to access of the \$200-million fund announced yesterday?

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

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, any and all circumstances that cause hardship to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from Trump's betrayal of Canada and our trade relationship and our longstanding, historical, centuries-old allyship will be eligible for supports as we better identify what is necessary.

But unlike that side, we plan to succeed. They plan to fail. Their plan is to subsidize the richest Americans buying seafood, which is already tariffed and taxed. That is not a sensible approach. That's what the defined as risk management and risk avoidance, providing hundreds of millions of dollars to American citizens, the elitists, so that they can buy our product while they're also taxing us. That makes no sense.

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

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, I think the viewers in the District of Bonavista will know now

why we don't ask questions about the fishery in this House.

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

**C. PARDY:** I mean, was that an answer? The only thing I would ask is that we're not into subsidizing any kind of companies or – that's not what we ever discussed. He's aware of that because we went back and forth yesterday, I would think, probably on two occasions for close to an hour. He's well aware of that, but this is a little disingenuous.

I would ask the question again: What particular situations in the fishing industry will lead to support – what particular situations?

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

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker, because now we have a clear answer from the Progressive Conservatives. They do not support the subsidization, intervening within the collective bargaining process, subsidizing American consumers. It is so helpful, because that was very confusing from the hon. Members just yesterday. Now that we have that matter resolved, that you do not support any kind of subsidization of crab price, that is helpful.

But what we can now concentrate on is that we will be selling crab into the United States in 2025. We'll help create the conditions to be able to do so. If our price negotiators, those at the table, can come to a mutually agreeable commitment to each other, that will happen. We will be there for industry supports. We will be there to support our plant workers. We will be there.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Come By Chance refinery is in the process of an economic shutdown. Voisey's Bay has laid off contractors and sent people home because of US government actions. The Liberals have not released a full tariff plan.

What, specifically, has the minister done to ensure continued operation of the refinery and Voisey's Bay?

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

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

I am happy to have an opportunity to speak to this question.

Certainly we are aware of the situation with Braya where we currently have a shutdown due to decisions taken in the US, which I would say were previous to the tariffs. They were tax credit decisions. We've met continuously with the union. We've met continuously with Braya, as we've talk to the federal government, who are the solution providers for the situation that we have here, in terms of making sure that we have tax credits to compete with the United States. That is the market for where we are going.

We are ready to work with them as well. We have provided significant support to them in the past. In fact, I think our investment kept the refinery open. It kept thousands of job hours and, in fact, led to an over \$1-billion refurbishment of that plant. We've shown our ability to help before and everybody there knows we are on deck to help again.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, when my colleague asked yesterday about the impact of the rising cost of electricity on people across the province, the minister responded that government is removing the gas tax. Not everyone drives a car. People are angry and afraid, especially in the light of tariffs and wondering why this government continues to leave them out in the cold.

I ask the minister again: Will this government remove the provincial portion of HST from all forms – all forms – of home heating?

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

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

I certainly appreciate the questions, especially over the last 24 hours, around the cost of living and the concerns around that. When I responded yesterday, it was in that vein, that we have been providing cost-of-living supports. It is something that the Members opposite have requested previously, that we consider the removal of HST.

As I've said in the past, it is not up to the provincial government. It is actually the federal government who is responsible for the harmonized sales tax. So we don't have the flexibility to remove HST from one particular item, but we'll certainly work with the federal government to see exactly what we can do, especially in light of these very difficult times.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, removing the provincial portion of HST from all forms of home

heating would help everyone: seniors on fixed incomes, families and people who work two or three jobs to make ends meet. Not everyone heats their home with oil. With tariffs, people will be increasingly forced to make difficult choices between basic needs.

I ask the minister: Why does this government continue to refuse to help people stay warm this winter?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite. I mean, we are all seeing this, especially now at probably the coldest time of year, we are dealing with a cost-of-living issue here in this province, one that is shared by every single province, every single territory, every single State and, in fact, most jurisdictions around the world.

One thing I would point out, though – and again, government can't do everything for everybody. What we have done though is, last year, we spent \$214 million in rate mitigation to ensure we have the lowest electricity rates in Atlantic Canada. In fact, we're probably going to be committing \$2 billion up to 2030 just so we don't have a state of electricity shock for people right now.

Again, while I would say that we're always committed to trying to find ways to reduce the cost of living, we're trying to find ways to make things better. We've done a lot and certainly we're better than anywhere else in Atlantic Canada when it comes to our home heating costs via electricity.

Thank you.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I could tell you health care is a big concern in Corner Brook, I can assure you. The two ministers know it by the email I sent you this morning. I thank the Member for Windsor Lake for always responding to the concerns. I just got to recognize that.

The emergency department in Corner Brook Regional Hospital is in a critical situation. Over 50 long-term care patients are in acute-care beds in the facility. This situation was known to government for a number of years but never addressed. People are turned away or live in corridors.

Recently, the CEO announced 45 beds to be opened up at the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital. He said: This should alleviate the problem. The next day, the Member for Corner Brook stated that the long-term care solution is a long-term care facility. Who is correct?

Are the 45 beds efficient or are they not sufficient to take care of the health care needs in Western Newfoundland?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question.

Seniors are involved in the alternate level of care problem that exists across Canada, in actual fact, but certainly is afflicting our institutions. The challenge is placing these folk into appropriate levels of support. There is a system flow issue in Western and the solution for the immediate short term is to utilize the space that exists in the old facility, Western Memorial Regional Hospital, which, actually, is in really rather good condition given that it was neglected after the decision of the previous crowd to build a new place which took them 14 years and we did it in the end.

I take the Member opposite's comment. We're working with the families and we're working with community supports to try and remedy that problem there.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns of many people in Western Newfoundland is a family doctor. I heard the minister's comment today about fee-for-service. This was the same minister who was dead set against cataract surgeries. Right now, the cataract surgery wait time is 30 days, not two years.

I just want to remind the minister: In Alberta, 56 nurse practitioners have started a practice or joined one. I read a quote from the minister: So we need to make sure that there's easy access that will actually save dollars at the emergency room and other areas. The nurse practitioner primary care program was announced in 2023, a way to strengthen Alberta's primary care system. Alberta considers –

**SPEAKER:** Stick to your question, please.

**E. JOYCE:** Why doesn't the minister consider nurse practitioners to alleviate the concerns of seniors who can't afford to pay or don't have a family doctor?

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

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

I, too, have looked at the Alberta system. It is not fee-for-service. It is a method of compensating nurse practitioners in private practice. We are in discussions with the RNU and the nurse practitioner group within that to look at ways of compensating those nurse practitioners who wish to retain a private practice rather than come into a publicly funded facility.

Fee-for-service for nurse practitioners will not work. However, there are other ways of paying them and we're looking into it.

**SPEAKER:** 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:** Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall meet to conduct Government Business on Friday, March 7, beginning at 10 a.m. and that if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

**SPEAKER:** Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

### **Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given**

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

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

I'd like to just take a moment to respond to a question from yesterday afternoon from the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels. I told him I'd get back to him with the information on the availability of new snow clearing equipment that's been purchased by the province.

Mr. Speaker, our government allocated the largest ever purchase for heavy equipment in the province's history of \$125 million.

Fifteen new pieces of equipment have been put into service, all throughout the province. I can tell the Member opposite that of the 15 pieces that are here, in service, 10 of which are in ridings that are represented by Members opposite, which is fair, and more equipment is coming. There are 24 actually here in the province today and being put into service.

There is some work that has to be done before they can go into service, but I can assure every Member in this House, this is the largest purchase of heavy equipment, of snowplows in the province's history and we are committed to a five-year plan to renew our fleet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Petitions.

### **Petitions**

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

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS there have not been any improvements in Wi-Fi and cell service 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.

Speaker, I presented this one yesterday, I've presented it many times. I think, the thing is that the minister actually gave a good answer yesterday in saying about working with providers and stuff like that. The reason why I wanted to introduce the petition again today is to publicly let the minister know that if he'd like to start a think tank or to have like a brainstorming session or anything like that, I think, myself and the Member for Terra Nova and the Member for Bonavista, would love to join him and –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It's very difficult to hear the Member speak. If Members want to have conversations, please take them outside.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

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

Like I said, I think we'd like if the minister would entertain it, then we'd certainly like to collaborate on that because I think this can have been kicked down the road too far. To every problem there's a solution, we just need to find it.

Nobody has the silver bullet; nobody has all the answers in their back pocket. The thing is that we're looking at bringing our province up to the day and age of being the same as everybody else. I think that one of the solutions that we could look at is the way they did pharmacare down in New Zealand, where they brought in the providers, and they got them to do an RFP on their services that they would be able to provide. But then once that was done, they eliminated all competition and there was one provider, but then they had a contract that stated about non-increases, they would

get the same price across the board, everybody would be on an equal playing field and it would be better for their whole health care system.

So what I'm saying about Wi-Fi is that if we bring in all the providers and they show us what they're providing and what their interest is in the investment side, because this needs to be invested in and it needs to be invested in now. I don't think that we can wait any longer on Wi-Fi and cell service throughout the province.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

St. Shotts Road on the Southern Avalon is in need of major repairs. These roads are in deplorable condition to the point it's a safety issue. This road is relied on by residents and visitors on a daily basis. With a World Heritage UNESCO site in the area, there is an increased volume in traffic in the region.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this piece of infrastructure for the safety of residents and visitors to allow a safer commute on this roadway.

Again, Speaker, I'll do this petition again on the road in St. Shotts. Many examples of tourists being in the area with flat tires, rims broken off, two flat tires at times. The department does what they can by putting down cold patch on the road to make it as best they can. But lots of times you drive on this road, you're on the opposite side of the road when you're driving to find a good piece of pavement and even then, that's not even safe.

Lots of times when you drive in the nighttime you're hitting these potholes. There are residents up in that area that travel with tire inflation kits and tires and jacks in order to help people out, tourists and anybody else in the region that experiences any trouble. Lots of times you hear from people on motorcycles. I hear from people that go over there to go to St. Vincent's to go to the whale watching in July, that it's not a fit road. They will go the opposite way, go Salmonier Line way to go around the loop. Which is not acceptable.

So hopefully the minister, when they get the budget done, will have this on their list to get done. Hopefully on their five-year road plan to get done. A list that we can see in the future to see when this might be done for the residents of the Trepassey and St. Shotts area.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Nursing students completing a Bachelor of Science in nursing at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador undertake no less than 1,600 hours of unpaid clinical placements.

The rising tuition costs at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador have placed additional burden on students, forcing many to seek outside employment to cover their university fees and living expenses to support dependants.

Inadequate funding for preceptorship and independent placements fails to recognize the significant time and effort invested by nursing students during these critical experiences.

Nursing students engaged in clinical placements and full-time studies find it challenging to maintain part-time employment, thus impeding their ability to cover the educational and living experiences.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide nursing students with fair compensation for clinical placements that exceed 48 hours per semester, reflecting the time and effort they dedicate to their clinical work. This compensation should at least align with compensation provided for a living minimum wage. As well as remove the fees associated with clinical placements for local and international nursing students to alleviate the financial strain faced by students and ensure equitable treatment compared with students in other programs.

Speaker, we all are aware of the huge importance of our health care professionals to this province and we know about the shortages when it comes to nursing. If we're going to promote nursing here, we need to make it affordable for them.

I've talked to young nurses that have come from the Mainland and young nurses that are here, who just graduate and they're taking on agency roles. They're taking on agency roles because they have these huge student loans and expenses to pay off and, of course, once you become an agency nurse, it's hard to come back.

But with this proposal, with this petition, having them live in the different parts of our province without having to worry so much about how they feed themselves and how they pay for their accommodations, they will get a more favourable opinion of that location and, in all probability, we will have nurses that would be there in those locations.

So I do call upon this hon. House to take a serious look at this when it comes to clinical

placements and preceptorships for nursing students.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our government leaders to ensure that fair electricity rates be provided to residents in Northern Labrador communities.

The electricity rates charged to Northern Labrador residents are cost prohibitive to adequately heating their homes.

Above the ceiling of 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents are charged 19 cents a kilowatt hour. This is the highest rate in the entire province, preventing most residents from being able to afford to heat their homes with electric heat. Low-income families and households that don't have the manpower or the means to haul wood are the greatest impacted.

Poorly heated houses often result in damage, creating expensive repairs for frozen pipes, moisture damage and mould. Poorly heated houses also create social and mental health issues that can be long lasting. We strongly believe that changes to electricity rates need to be made for the Northern Labrador residents of Torngat Mountains.

Now, Speaker, I just read out this petition and, in this petition, it says: "Torngat residents are charged 19 cents a kilowatt hour." The date of the signatures on this petition is for 2023. I have a newer petition that was signed last week in Nain and, actually, I had to upgrade it to say that Torngat Mountains residents are charged 21.3 cents a kilowatt hour. That's what we pay in Northern Labrador, and what's the result? Poorly heated houses because, in actual fact, when people have to rely on stove oil and you're paying \$1,000 to \$2,000

a month to heat your house, what happens is you don't pay that. People can't afford that.

So your house is not adequately heated and the consequences of that is cold people, elders, children, families and also mould and mildew, problems with pipes bursting. So people who can't heat their homes, adequately each day, are impacted and what also suffers, Speaker, is their mental health but also their physical health, their social interactions, all these things.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** And, Speaker, for me, it's not about getting up in the House and beating up the Liberal government on their failure to address this. I'm calling attention to the fact that, years ago, when I was in university and, actually, when I was in high school, we knew that things were changing, that we were going to have to go renewable energy.

The reason why we're paying 21.3 cents a kilowatt hour is Newfoundland Hydro told me – Wendy Williams, in a meeting, told me that they don't want the people in Northern Labrador using electric heat to heat their houses. I sat down with them and the Member for Labrador West was there and the Member for Lake Melville was there and I explained the hardships of having to haul wood and the cost of the fuel and getting the machines to haul the wood.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

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

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

**K. HOWELL:** Speaker, I rise on a point of order in accordance with Standing Order 49.

Earlier in Question Period, the Member for Bonavista referred to the Member for Corner Brook as being disingenuous. I'd like to point out that in a ruling earlier this sitting, we determined that "disingenuous" was unparliamentary language and I'd like to ask the Member to retract his statement or to offer an apology.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, I unequivocally retract that statement.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Let the Deputy Government House Leader speak.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Let's start again, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), this

House not adjourn at 5:30 on Thursday, March 6, 2025.

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

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to further consider Bill 105, which is in progress.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

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

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 105, An Act for 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 Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

As we all know, we have to pass Interim Supply to allow for the payment for services, our payroll, all that until the budget is actually approved. I don't think anyone in this House is going to vote that down. We all know we have such a wonderful, professional, hard-working public service and there are many programs and services out there that need to continue unhindered. That's a piece we will certainly be approving. However, with any money bill, we get the opportunity too talk about other issues of importance.

It was interesting yesterday because we got a lot of talk about the tariffs, and we know what's happening down south of the border with our friends. They are our friends, it just happens to be they have a terrible leader, if I can say that.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Unfriendly leader.

**P. DINN:** Unfriendly leader.

When I saw all and you heard it on the news, what's happening down there, and it does build in yourself patriotism and we're going to fight and we're never going to

surrender, I thought about that, the Winston Churchill quote. I just thought I'd read it in here: We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the streets, and we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

Let it be known that on this side of the House, and I would expect throughout the House, that's our sentiment when it comes to dealing with what's happening down in the United States.

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

**P. DINN:** It's something that hits – well it hits home financially, but it hits home to the heart, and I guarantee you, we will never surrender. We will keep fighting, and we do that as a unified group. So make no mistake about that.

It was disappointing yesterday to hear Members opposite shouting out about tariffs and you didn't ask a question on tariffs and, oh, it mustn't be important. But it's interesting, this is Private Member's Day for government, for the Liberal side of the House. A prime opportunity to have discussion on the tariffs, to have discussion on the \$200-million contingency fund, a prime opportunity for us to work together to all feed in –

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

**P. DINN:** – offer suggestions, offer solutions, really show that you want to be unified in this approach.

But here we are discussing bills, a bill that we know is going to pass, but we were told how important the tariffs are. Actions speak larger than words. It speaks larger than words. So they didn't want to talk about it. They didn't want to talk about it and that's disappointing; I'm being polite.

But the other thing about it is we hear on a daily basis, yes, we do hear about the tariffs, but one thing that has not changed,

especially in my district and I suspect in everyone's district, we still get the seniors, individuals on fixed incomes who cannot make ends meet, that's been daily – that's daily. The tariffs – we can't preclude what's happening day to day with individuals.

I suspect if you can't focus on multiple things and you focus on one thing, then maybe you need another job because in this role as an MHA you deal with multiple issues at a time – multiple issues, 24-7. And I have to answer in my office, unlike the government side, we all have a very dedicated CA and ourselves in the office and we answer those calls as best we can.

But we continue to see –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Excuse me, (inaudible).

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**P. DINN:** I think, well, look, we all have dedicated CAs, if that's what the Member wants me to hear. I totally agree, I totally agree.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**P. DINN:** I would tell the Member integrity is doing the right thing when nobody's watching.

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

**P. DINN:** When nobody's watching; not playing games, not playing games.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I remind the Member, please.

**P. DINN:** Speaking up on some minutia here when I'm talking about seniors and when I'm talking about –

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

**P. DINN:** I hope she'll just stand up soon and talk about the real issues in this province: the cost of living. Young single parents who can't pay the bills. Seniors who make decisions between food, shelter and their medication. These are serious issues. These are issues that don't need the rhetoric in this House.

With this bill, as I've said, we have a public service that does a wonderful job on a daily basis. We have a public service that is deserving to be secure in knowing that the bills will be paid, and their programs and services will continue.

As I've said, we all understand the effect of what's happening down south of our borders. We all understand – well maybe we don't understand what President Trump is doing, because it baffles us every day. Baffles us every day.

But we cannot and we will not lose focus on the fact that there continues to be issues here in this province: cost of living, housing, transportation, mental health issues. As I mentioned yesterday, the young lady out here, Kristi Allan, 222 weeks out in front of this building. Is she concerned about tariffs? I'm sure she is. Is that her main concern? I don't think so.

So if we're truly dedicated to doing what's right in this province, then we have to be able to focus on many issues and we really have to stay focused on individuals in our communities with lived experiences. I cannot imagine what Kristi Allan goes through. I can only listen to what she says.

I can't imagine what a young mother who can't find child care for the little one, what they go through on a daily basis. I can't imagine, although I can relate, to individuals who have seniors and looking for home care and looking for staying at home, even actual individuals come in and you can't get them. Parents struggling with mobility issues.

Grandparents struggling with dementia issues. It's something we've got to stay focused on.

The tariffs – big, big, huge item, but that's on top of everything else. So we cannot lose focus on that. We have to work as one, and I do apologize to the Member opposite. I know where she was on this, but we've got to work together on this.

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

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

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

I'll speak to Interim Supply, an always important bill that I bet you 95 per cent of the population probably doesn't know the significance of. It's an annual endeavour and it's an opportunity, just for people watching out there, where it is what they call a money bill, it's a chance for all Members to rise if they choose and speak to this measure which is, essentially, to make sure the bills are paid until we get to the budget.

Again, to clarify what the Member opposite just said, I think that's where there was some confusion because I think the Member said, in mistake, it was sort of a slip of the tongue there, that we don't have committed CAs on this side. That's when you see the backs come up of Members on this side, because we all share the same feelings about our constituency assistants. They are the unsung heroes of what we all do, no matter where we are in this province.

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

**A. PARSONS:** What I would say, just to respond to some of the commentary that the Member made – and I get the gist of what he's saying because I think that if I go out there – right now, I do think tariffs are on everybody's mind, whether you're down south or up here. I don't know, just given some of the stories I've seen or some of the

conversations, including in the south and up here, if people understand the impact of tariffs.

I think there's a case of where the Member can be right but, at the same time, we can also be right because the average person, they're hearing about tariffs. They're worried about tariffs. They're worried about the general state of affairs in North America right now, what this means.

I just got an email from someone else, because there's been conversation about power bills. I responded to that individual. People here are worried about cost of living. People here are worried about heat, food, how do I get to work, all those things. We know that; everybody knows that.

So it's a chance for us to point out, of the things we do. I mentioned this earlier; I got a question on this. We spent \$240 million in 2024 to keep the rates what they are. Without the money we invested, we would have a rate that went from 14-odd cents to 24-odd cents, where we get into sticker shock. We get into electricity shock. That is a massive impact.

What many people don't realize, because once we get past the memes on Facebook, once we get past the banter we have, we actually have the lowest in Atlantic Canada. In fact, I had a chart there a while ago looking at the major cities across Canada. St. John's is far from the highest. We are better off than many other jurisdictions.

Now, I'll tell you one jurisdiction that is lower, Quebec. They are lower. We all know why. That's why we spent four days here a couple of months ago having that debate. That's something to look forward to in the future, as well, because again, not trying to relitigate this, but we think it's one way for us to fix that imbalance that exists.

With the billions of dollars to come in, as I said to the individual who just messaged me, what does this deal mean? I said: Well,

any government that has \$17 billion in new revenue that they were not anticipating can do anything they choose with it, which hopefully includes paying down debt, investing in the future and taking care of the day-to-day needs that we have and making things better.

So I point that out, that's important because a lot of people don't know that, but they're paying less than their neighbour in Halifax, Fredericton and Charlottetown. They're paying less than many other major centres. Am I saying that that should make them feel okay? No, that doesn't mean in many cases people aren't feeling that, but it's not to say the government is not cognizant of what they're doing. That's why we're debating keeping the gas tax in half. I mean, that's a massive step and it costs government revenues massively; money that could be spent elsewhere in the health care issues we talk about, which has been front and centre here and it is everywhere.

There's only so much coming in. We had to put it elsewhere. The reality is, in many cases, in this province, in many budgets, the expenditures are far greater than the revenue coming in. You have to make a strategic decision on what you can do and we're not going to please everyone.

I'd like to think, though, that the choices we made have made life better, but that is far from saying that it fixes everyone's problems; it doesn't. We're dealing with these health care issues. The expenditures are higher now than they ever were. They get higher. We're spending more to try to fix this. Again, not a Newfoundland and Labrador issue, it is a national and international issue, but these are just a few of the things. The money that's going back, there are all kinds of different pots of money, whether it's going into schools and school lunch programs.

I hear about the sugar tax. I get it; it ticks people off. I get it. But again, maybe this is a case where we haven't done a good

enough job explaining. I think some people talk about it and complain about it all day and they probably already drink Diet Pepsi. It doesn't even affect them. It's just nice to complain about it. It's like when I went down to Burgeo – not the case because I've spent many years trying to get the road in better shape, but early on when I was in Opposition, they'd say, my God, that road is terrible. And I'd say, yeah, it's rough. When were you last on it? They'd say, oh, I wasn't on it. I just heard buddy over there say it.

I used to get that a lot. Sometimes you figure out that a lot of people say a lot of things, but it's not always accurate. Now what I would say is the sugar tax, yes, people can complain about it, but I will say that I am pleased that the money that comes in – and I can't tell you what the amount is now. There's probably been an ATIPP on it, I don't know. The money does go into things that are important like activity programs, trying to make it easier when we get the rebate on activities for our kids, when it goes in the school lunch programs, all these things. I think it's actually cent for cent, dollar for dollar. People can disagree on that policy approach, that's fine. I get that, but it's a choice that was made.

Now, coming back to the greater point in my first chance to talk to this, the Member was upset about the tariff question and I get why the Member was upset. The reason this side was upset was because the tariffs have an impact on everybody. They do have an impact on cost of living. They have a massive, massive impact, and it's international. It's going to be international in scale, because let's not think that the effects end here in North America, that it's north and south, because it's actually south below that. It's going to go elsewhere. The changes we make are going to have an impact in Europe.

But it's going to impact people here. There's going to be pain felt here, there is no doubt. Which is why when the first question was the one that was asked yesterday, this was

a chance to say, well, actually the concern can't be for the cost of living or this or that because that was more of a political question. So, again, I'm not saying the Member should have asked something different; I'm certainly not saying that our Minister of Finance should feel any different about the answer she gave. There it is.

I will say the tariffs – and part of the problem here, the Member was absolutely dead on, is the uncertainty. We don't know what's going to happen down south; we don't know what the president is going to do on any given day. But I'd like to think that the steps that we have taken will hopefully shelter us a bit in those times.

I'll just use mining for an example. Sometimes we get criticized for work that we do to diversify, work that we do to try to do something different. Last year, I did make a trip to Japan. I met with a number of companies. One of them, Mitsubishi, actually has an investment in Newfoundland and Labrador already up in Labrador, working on future investment.

But one company we met with, which was Nippon Steel – now, it's funny because you don't often see the good or the bad at the time that you do it, and I don't usually make a big deal about things because you try to get out of that. What I will say is that some people will look at that and say, well, why did you do that? It's unnecessary. Like, why is government out doing that? They say, oh, it's glamorous; you're out travelling around. To those people, I say, yeah, you try cramming a six-foot-three, 240-pound frame in the seat 21C on Air Canada Rouge, there's nothing glamorous about that – nothing glamorous about that.

What we did return with is this: Months later, Nippon Steel invested \$250 million into Champion, into the Kami Project. I'm not saying by any stretch, and I've already done interviews on this, that it was our intervention that caused it, but it certainly wasn't our intervention that hurt it. It could

only have assisted the work that Champion, that Kami was already doing.

Again, we'll get into Kami and Champion with the Member for Lab West after and the impacts it's going to have there, and again, what we learned at MINEX, a lot of conversations about the impacts on communities.

But, again, these things are sheltering us. So this is a company. Rio Tinto is already shipping most of their product to Europe, to Asia. We're not worried about the States. This company has their investment coming from Japan. These are the protections that we're trying to do. When we're talking about energy exports to Western Europe, these are the reasons we're doing this. So when we talk about tariffs and when we talk about changing up trade and diversifying and market attraction, this is why we're doing it.

On that note, I know I'll have future opportunity to speak to this, but I'm glad I got at least one chance, Chair.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now call the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

Great to have my first opportunity to speak. First of all, Chair, I would just say I would be remiss – this is going to be my first opportunity. I just wanted to, on behalf of myself and I'm sure all of my colleagues in the House of Assembly would agree, send my condolences to the family and friends of Debbie Hanlon, St. John's councillor –

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

**P. LANE:** – and a person who was certainly larger than life and a friend to many people, I'm sure, in this room. She definitely made her mark within the City of St. John's, for

sure, and I'm sure that there's nobody, probably, throughout the province who didn't know who she was. So I just want to wish her family all the best. It's a great loss.

Mr. Chair, I hear this little bit of a back and forth the last couple of days about whether we should be talking about tariffs or other things. All the things that we talk about here, I think, are important things. From what I've heard, they certainly seem to be to me. I think the reality of it is that we know that tariffs are something that we now have to face and there's going to be implications and there are things that we can do and that we need to do and we need to talk about doing. At the same time, life still goes on and I think that's the point. People still have health care concerns. They still have cost-of-living concerns. They still have child care concerns and so on.

My phone at my office, and I'm sure other Members would say that their phone didn't stop ringing as of yesterday from people with these issues because Trump decided to put on tariffs. Everything else that was going on before that is still going on. So all the things that we need to talk to are all-important things.

I've got enough notes here now to talk about tariffs and different aspects of things that I think we could and should be doing. It would take me about, at least, an hour. I'll have lots of time because we'll have multiple times on this and we'll have the budget and everything else, but I have some other things as well that I want to talk about.

The first one I just want to raise, because I wanted to bring these things up at the first opportunity, talking to constituents and so on, I want to talk about home care for a moment. Of course, we've only got 10-minute intervals here so I'll try to get this one and maybe one other in if I can.

Home care: When you think about it, okay, home care really is an extension of health

care and the idea that government has had – which I agree with by the way; I'm sure everybody agrees with – is that the longer that we can keep people, seniors and so on, in their own home as opposed to being in personal care home or a long-term care facility and so on, it's a win-win. First of all, a lot of seniors want to stay in their own home with their families. They don't want to be in care homes. There are some that do, but a lot don't. They would rather be in their own home and be around family and so on.

From a government point of view, it's a lot cheaper. The costs are a lot lower to have someone stay in their own home, with home care supports, then to put them in a facility. Any kind of facility, whether it's an acute-care facility, personal care home, long-term care, people who are incarcerated – the most expensive costs the government is when we are housing people in some kind of a facility for whatever reason.

It's important for people's health and their mental well-being and for families and it's a win-win for everybody. But if you're going to have somebody who needs home care, first of all, we need to make sure they're getting the appropriate level of home care and the supports they need. And I could talk for an hour about people who are not getting the hours they need, but I'm not going to go there right now.

But they also have to have people looking after them who they're comfortable with, who they trust and so on. There are two types of home care providers, generally, in this province. Most of them we will be familiar with would be home care agencies. They're certainly most prevalent in the urban areas, but there are also people who either for their own reasons, that they don't like having strangers and people they don't know coming into their home and sometimes it's not always the same person, it's different people, they're not comfortable with it; they would rather to have what they call self-managed care, where you're not hiring someone from the home care agency,

but you are like the employer and you are hiring a person, whether it be a neighbour or someone you know or a family member or someone to look after that person.

I would say that's probably even more common in the rural parts of the province, where they don't even have any home care agencies. You're in remote places, you cannot call Rosedale, or any of these home care agencies to come; it's just not an option. So we have what is known as self-managed care.

If we're going to have people to look after our elderly, these are our moms, our dads, our grandmothers, our grandfathers and so on, our loved ones. Then we need to make sure that they're getting the appropriate care by people who are capable of giving that care.

And if you're going to have that and have properly trained people, because it's not just someone to come in and wash the dishes and do the laundry. In some cases, we're doing wound care and changing tubes and all kinds of specialized stuff for people. Then these people, if you're going to get someone to do it, they have to be properly trained and they have to be properly paid to do the job.

It's pretty sad when you can make more money – and this is no offence to somebody that's working fast food or at Tim Horton's or anything. I don't mean it offensively to anyone who does that. Anyone who goes to work, as far as I'm concerned, has my respect. Anyone who gets out of bed and goes to work and earns money, whatever it is, I don't care what they're doing, they have my respect. But I would say it's pretty sad when the people that we put in place to care for our loved ones, our seniors, our moms and our dads, that they can make more money pouring coffee at a coffee shop than they can by taking care of the personal needs and medical needs of our parents and grandparents. You talk about placing

the value in society that we're placing on it. It is sad, it is so sad.

Certainly when it came to home care agencies, back in December of 2024, I believe it was, this government, to their credit, listened, because it's something that was out there, and there was an increase. I'm not sure the amount, but there was I think a significant increase provided to home care agencies so that they could pay their employees more to look after people. That's a good thing.

The problem is – here's the but – when it comes to self-managed care there is no increase. Those people were given no increase. Those people are making just, now with the increase of minimum wage they're about a dollar above minimum wage. That's all they're getting to care for our elderly, our moms, our dads, our grandparents and so on; they're getting about a buck above minimum wage to provide that kind of care.

How in the heck are you going to get somebody to do that kind of work for such low pay? Especially when they're not even getting full-time hours, because they might have three hours with this client, then they have to go drive – they probably can't afford a car – get a taxi or get something for another three or four hours with another client, and maybe another hour with somebody else. And to do that for just above the minimum wage, it's impossible to get people to perform these kinds of very, very important work for such little remuneration. That's something that needs to change.

I understand and we all understand the budgetary process and in a later speech I'll be talking about our provincial debt and the need to manage our debt. So I don't want to seem kind of hypocritical but there are certain services that we need to provide. This is not wasteful spending; this is something that we absolutely have to do for our seniors.

I appeal to the Minister of Finance, maybe it's in the budget already, I don't know, but please look at people who have to self-managed care and, please, ensure that these people are properly remunerated for the very, very important work they do in caring for the most vulnerable in our society: our seniors, our moms, our dads, our grandmothers, our grandfathers. That's the very least we can do for them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Chair.

I always appreciate that, and it is certainly a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and represent the people from my good district and I always appreciate the opportunity to stand.

Today we are speaking to Bill 105, which is the Interim Supply bill. I thought it's interesting to note that over my last four years here in this hon. House – I go back to 2023 – in Interim Supply we were debating \$2.9 billion. Last year, in 2024, we were debating \$3.2 billion and today, here in 2025, \$3.94 billion.

So over the last two years there's been an increase of just over a billion dollars and I understand, when listening to the opening remarks from the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board that we have \$200 million for tariff response and I know that there are TI projects that may be approved but to have an increase of over \$1 billion, it would be interesting to hear from the Finance Minister as to what would constitute such an increase. It'd be interesting to know what the increase is to be, and I appreciate it if the Minister of Finance would answer that when she does have an opportunity to speak again.

Mr. Chair, we know why we're here and there's times I have to think and remind ourselves why we're here. We are here because we represent the people from our districts. We are their voices in the district and, of course, it's always important to listen to our constituents.

So as we debate the Interim Supply bill, and there's much debate over tariffs, and I understand and we all appreciate the affect it can have on our province when it comes to lowering or ceasing our exports, when it comes to driving inflation, lessening our Canadian dollar, of course, or affecting business as a whole. We understand that.

But because this is going on, and the Minister of IET spoke earlier and I was happy to hear him make a couple of comments when it comes to the day-to-day issues that we have to deal with are still here and they're still very important and prevalent. I know that many of my colleagues spoke to this Interim Supply bill, and they spoke on health care, and I'll take a moment to speak on that as well because I'm continuing to hear from residents from my district on health care when it comes to the lack of it still. We still have people that don't have a doctor or a nurse practitioner. I'm hearing from people regularly. If they do have one, it's the length of time to get in to see their doctor or nurse practitioner.

There are also major issues with wait times when it comes to health care. I have, unfortunately, an issue that came up just this week. A young woman from my district, only 29 years old, a cancer patient who was waiting on an ultrasound and she was told there's a six- to eight-month wait for an ultrasound, and I took great offence to that. It's unfortunate that this person had to wait this amount of time, but this is the reality that people are dealing with with respect to the wait times.

I had an elderly gentleman from Outer Cove look for a hip replacement, he's been on the wait-list 2½ years. Two and a half years for

a wait-list for a hip replacement. These are the real-life examples that are happening day to day; this is what affects people; this is what keeps them awake at night; this is what is first and foremost in their minds when it comes to health care.

Yesterday, my colleague from Harbour Main asked a question and I believe my colleague from Ferryland asked it as well. When they said: Has your health care gotten better? Has your health care gotten better? Well, my colleague from Harbour Main explained a situation that she's dealing with an elderly gentleman from her district who spent three days in the emergency room.

Mr. Chair, you know very well, as well as the other Members of this House, that I lost my father in January of last year and the last time we were at the emergency room with him – and I haven't spoken about this publicly, but from my colleague yesterday, it brought up the whole situation. We spent 76 hours in emergency with my father on a stretcher. I don't care who you are, what part of the province you're from, that's unacceptable.

After 48 hours, I went to the charge nurse. My father was on a stretcher, near the offload bay for the ambulance. It was cold and he wasn't comfortable. He couldn't get to the washroom. He had no privacy and I spoke to the charge nurse. I asked the charge nurse if they could move him somewhere else in the emergency room that he could be a bit more comfortable. Well, Mr. Chair, the charge nurse shot back at me and she said: I can't do anything about it; go speak to your MHA. To which I replied: I am his MHA.

At that point, Mr. Chair, the charge nurse started to go up one side of me and down the other, because we weren't doing anything to help health care. At that time, a manager came in, took the charge nurse away and apologized and my father was moved. It shouldn't have to come to that. So

I know exactly what my colleague from Harbour Main is going through with her constituent, about spending time in emergency room. It's unacceptable. This is one of the issues.

When we got upstairs and the word travelled that the incident happened in emergency, well, of course, the nurse spoke to me and she said, it's just as bad up here as it is downstairs. The problem is when the minister opposite has said, looking for solutions, it's not an easy fix. But one thing, when I spoke to the staff is, the staff didn't feel respected.

I know the little things that are done on a day-to-day basis make a huge difference, but when the staff come out to me and say that their heating doesn't work and they work in excessive heat, or they've been told multiple times that they have to work short staffed because there's no money in the budget to bring someone in – these are the staff's words, not mine – when the hallways are full of equipment because there's nowhere to store the equipment that's not being used and it makes a difference when you're moving patients or patients are trying to become more ambulatory, they're working with broken vital carts, they're working with broken thermometers, all of these things – I know that the Minister of Health does not have a hand in day-to-day operations. But all these things make a big difference to being respectful in their workplace and them doing their job in an orderly fashion and providing the care that people need.

So all this comes down to listening – as I said, when I opened up, it's important to listen – to the staff that are in the facilities and doing the work. I know that it is difficult. My colleague from Ferryland said about his father being in emergency. It's not a good situation when you're in it and, of course, when they see you there as an MHA, you tend to be approached and to be asked questions.

But I can certainly tell you that we have to remember why we are here collectively when it comes to health care. We have to make health care better. It comes down to listening to the people, the nurses, the doctors, the people with their boots on the ground in these hospitals making a difference day to day when it comes to our loved ones.

Mr. Chair, I'll touch on it very briefly, because I only have a couple of minutes left. My daughter is doing the paramedicine program at the College of North Atlantic. She's loving the program; it's going well. She's currently doing her 15-week clinical. She did half her clinical in Holyrood and now she's doing the other half in the Health Sciences.

She has heard me over the last four years speak about ambulances and her brother is, of course, a firefighter and being red alerts, but she didn't really grasp what was going on until she's in the ambulance and she's four hours in an offload bay waiting to get into the emergency room, or she's on a call and it's being redirected to another call.

She now realizes what the ambulatory services are and how they're operating. Her first or second day home from Health Sciences, she wanted a debrief, of course – not breaching any confidentiality, but she wanted to talk about her day. Of course, I'm glad for my daughter to talk about her day any time at all.

But when she realized the parameters that ambulatory services are operating under, it was an eyeopener for her to be in the ambulance, boots on the ground, to be caring for the patients and her question was: Dad, government has to do something about this. I said: Darling I know, government are working on it, no doubt. It's not an overnight fix, but I do know that with respect to the among of red alerts, I know that from my time as mayor with the Town of Pouch Cove and the fire department, dealing with red alerts, it's a very, very

difficult – it's also a dangerous position at times, because people's lives are in the balance.

So I know my time has gone extremely quickly. I hope I do have another chance to speak on it again, but I do know, Chair, we know why we're here. We'll continue to bring the issues from our constituents here. As I had the question for the Minister of Finance when I began speaking, I do hope that she does have an answer for me with respect to the increase of one-point-some-billion dollars from 2023 to 2025 and how that relates.

Mr. Chair, thank you for your time.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now recognize the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

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

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to stand here this afternoon representing the great people from the District of Burin - Grand Bank.

Chair, last night as I watched, some, not all, of the president's address to Congress – and I was not interested in a lot of what he had to say, but I was interested in what he was going to say about our tariffs. When he was finished, I couldn't help but think about 9/11 and the impact that had on this province.

I remember being in Gander to *Come From Away* and being so proud to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. I talked to people that went to New York, some friends of mine, and they saw the play up there. They were so proud as they walked out of the building and people wanted to talk to them and thank them and so on for the great hospitality and caring and so on. It was so touching.

As well, from a more personal side of it, I come from the Town of St. Lawrence and we heard a lot of great stories in the House yesterday. I wanted to just touch on the wreck of the *Pollux* and *Truxton* in St. Lawrence.

On February 18, 1942, two American warships, the *USS Pollux* and the *USS Truxton*, went aground just between the two communities of St. Lawrence and Lawn. There were 156 men on the *Truxton* and 233 on the *Pollux*. When they went aground in Chambers Cove, it was a rough night; it was a stormy night.

I remember getting a clear description of that from the late Lanier Phillips who came back to St. Lawrence on a number of occasions to talk. He was like a town hero. He said to me one time, it was the first time he felt what it was like to be a real human being, to be treated fairly and colour didn't matter. This man, by the way, walked with Martin Luther King. And he was a human rights activist in the United States for a number of years.

Anyway, after the ships went aground, some of the crew were able to get ashore and they crawled up over – now, if you've ever seen Chambers Cove, it's really, really high and the cliffs are really steep. They managed to crawl up. Some of them made it to a mining camp in Iron Springs. This mining camp, once they got there the men assembled, they shut the mine down and they all headed for Chambers Cove.

There was one ship in Chambers Cove, the other was in Lawn Point. So the people, the men from St. Lawrence and Lawn, went and tried to save as many as possible.

It was a terrible night. Men were lowered down over the cliffs on ropes, grabbing those who survived to bring them up to the top to get them to safety. Once they got to the mine, they were then transported to homes. It was the same thing with the Lawn rescue. Men from Lawn and St. Lawrence

on that rescue did the same thing. It's something that certainly, you know, from a town perspective, we're very proud of. We're proud of our people, we're proud that we were able to help.

In 1988, by the way, the town held a Come Home Year, and they invited all of the survivors and families from the two ships, and they came to St. Lawrence, and it was a week of activities and so on. It was heartwarming to see the survivors meet those people that rescued them and meet the women in the homes that were able to help. It was just amazing.

Of the 389 men on these two boats, the Town of St. Lawrence were able to rescue 186; the rest perished. We had this connection, it showed really how the generosity and caring of people in two small towns on the Burin Peninsula changed the lives of so many. As a gift to the Town of St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence was given a hospital, the U.S. Memorial Hospital. There's still a U.S. Memorial Health Centre in St. Lawrence, but there's a new building, but it's still called USM, affectionately by everybody out there. It services the needs of the people in that area, and if you go into the lobby of the USM, you will get the complete history of the event.

But I just want to say that because, you know, we do have a connection with the people, with Americans, and I'm sure there's a lot there, a lot of people in the US, a lot of families that have close ties to Newfoundland and Labrador and our country, Canada. We also have a world-class trail leading to this site now, if anybody would like to visit. We have a statue called *Echoes of Valour* and in this statue, created by Luben Boykov, there's a miner with his hand down and a sailor with his hand up. That shows our relationship with the US; what it has been.

While I have the floor, I just want to share the story, but I only have a couple of minutes left. As well, I want to and I'll get a

chance to speak again, hopefully. I hear a lot about seniors and being the minister responsible for seniors. You know, our government certainly supports seniors in the province to maintain dignity, to live independently and live with dignity.

I meet with seniors on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, I attended two functions last week, one was seniors' event. Two of them, as a matter of fact, were seniors' events in Grand Bank. The first one, there was about 230-240 seniors. The second event was a little more than that with seniors from all around the Burin Peninsula, 50+ Clubs.

As the Member for Gander said earlier, he talked about our seniors being worried, our seniors feeling anxiety about the tariffs, and they are. They really are. He wasn't exaggerating there a bit. It is a real issue and, you know, it's an issue for all of us, for all of us. I'm sure when you walked into your office today, when you came to work, the tariff thing was being discussed by your co-workers. It's everywhere.

But some of the things that we've done is that we've, certainly, increased the Seniors' Benefit by 15 per cent and this is impacting 50,000 seniors in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador aged 65 and older. We have a targeted basic income for seniors from 60-64. This is a great program. The uptake is improving. I can talk more about that at another time as well, but it is improving. We're getting more. The identified pool for those, by the way, is 350. When I checked a few days ago, we had 110 but it's very fluid. Enrolment is voluntary and it's very fluid.

So therefore, people come in at 60, we have always got people that are qualifying to come in and then we've got people that are leaving at 65. So, like I say, it's very fluid but it's something we're very proud of and it is working. It is working.

The Aging Well at Home Grant, the \$400 for snow clearing and other things, that's

something that also is a big uptake. I guess your offices were very busy.

I certainly have a lot more to say, I will hopefully get another opportunity.

Thank you so much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to the minister.

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

**CHAIR:** I now recognize the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

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

It's a pleasure for me to partake in this Interim Supply bill, it's my first. Before I start, I want to commend my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay on his approach yesterday on fiscal management and budget day reprocessing, you did a fantastic job. To me, this is what it's all about.

When I look, I'm appalled by the large amount of money that's allocated in this Supply bill for transportation and health care. When we go back to our districts and see what problems we have in those two portfolios it's appalling. It's just appalling to me.

I just want to go back to when I got elected last spring, same as all Members of this side and the opposite side of the House, we're all elected as MHAs and sworn to allegiance to represent the people of our districts, our constituents and take openness and transparency that we could do and go to the House with it, get what answers that they needed and that's what I intend to do and I will always do that. I will always advocate on behalf of my constituents.

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

**J. MCKENNA:** I will start with transportation, because transportation is a broad one. When you live in a district like

Fogo Island - Cape Freels you realize that. I just want to say that – just give you a heads up that Fogo Island - Cape Freels are very self-producing. We are putting millions of dollars into the economy of this province through tourism, small business and the fishery. We are definitely not a burden on this province.

When we ask for better transportation service, we are serious and we need it; that's why we ask, we need it. We're into a dilemma down there right now with our ferry system. The Transportation Department knew last fall that the *Kamutik W* was coming back to service Fogo Island this winter. We missed 80-something trips last year because of the high tides and surges because the boat is too big for the wharves that are in place down there.

We asked for mobile ramps to be put in place. They did it up on the Coast of Labrador; it worked. And if they had to do their homework then, not now – we're just learning that you have it all sent in now for engineering. Here's a couple of weeks' time the fishery opens. We're adding more transport trucks to the system. We're leaving transport trucks on a daily basis on some of the trips because they can't get on the ferry. They can't climb and go down another hill without tearing some undercarriage.

So those are the kinds of things that we want fixed. When we ask for something so simple as help with transportation – and it's not only the ferry system, it's the whole district – roads, culvert replacements. Roads are not fit to drive on. We have a serious problem with brush cutting down there. I took it on myself last spring after I got elected to drive the district and take pictures of the dangerous situation that the drivers on the roads were in in respect to hitting a moose or hitting a child on a bike. It's terrible; it's ridiculous.

But do you know what? Up to today, I have not heard any response on it. I did get an

email from someone in that department saying they had 10.2 kilometres allocated from Gambo to Hare Bay, which was not a grave issue as the lower part of the district, where my district starts.

Those are the kinds of that we're missing out on down there. To me, this kind of money that's allocated for transportation and we can't even get as much as a bit of brush cut. We can't keep up our roads to standards. I mean, this is not fair.

The money is not going back into rural Newfoundland. It's hurting the economy down there. It's hurting tourism. It's hurting people who have to go to medical appointments. And it's costly to the people. Most people have to leave the day before because it's uncertain that the ferry is going to run in the morning because of the tides. They have to drive to Gander, get hotel rooms, eat out at restaurants. So it's putting a burden on everything from health care to workers, to transportation, you name it.

And then to add insult to injury, we've been lobbying since I came in the House and you were lobbying long before that to bring back 24-hour snow clearing. For the sake of a couple of million dollars of a budget of this magnitude, something doesn't add up here. Something just doesn't add up here.

I'm getting calls from my district, from medical workers, ambulance drivers, rotational workers, people in the health care system in general and other people – transport drivers and everything – that have to drive those roads all hours of the night.

That's why I'm bringing this to the House. I'm not bringing this to the House to say that I'm a complainer. I'm acting on behalf of my constituents, and I'm going to stand by that. There are many, many other issues that are connected with the lack of input from this government in the District of Fogo Island - Cape Freels. When you see such a magnitude of dollars, to me, I'm flabbergasted. I'm appalled. I just can't

believe it. Something so simple as what we're asking for, not to get.

Then again, we'll talk about health care. The amount of money that's allocated there for health care and to get the calls that I'm getting from the constituents in my district, the wait times, the cancellations of surgeries, the wait times for colonoscopies. I even experienced that myself. I was supposed to have a colonoscopy done every two to three years. I finally got mine done last fall, 5½ years later. So I know the situation. I know what the people are going through. To me, this has to change. If we're going to be fair to the rural parts of this province and put more emphasis on the rural parts of this province, then those are the kinds of things we have to deal with.

As the MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands referred to home care, I get calls every day on home care. People's home care is cut. They are wanting increases. People are wanting to stay in their own homes. They want their home care increased. The home care workers are complaining about their wages. Like I said, it's only a little bit of a dollar difference between the minimum wage and the home care worker, and look at the responsibility there.

So when we talk about emphasis – and I've got to go back to buying local. You know, we need to be more proactive, not reactive. It seems like that every time there's a crisis, there's a reaction. There are no proactive things put in place.

I got hit on the buy local campaign. Here we are, asking everybody to buy local, yet we haven't put anything into the small businesses, the farmers, the sawmill operators, the small construction companies of this province who are employing numerous people, and we could be growing our own. We're importing root vegetables from the United States; it doesn't make sense with the land mass we have. Loosen up the Crown land, give it out, let people

start up businesses and put money back into the economy. That's our problem.

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

**J. MCKENNA:** I mean, to me, it's putting the cart before the horse. So you go to the cart to buy something local, the cart is empty. So what do I do now? Buy the horse? That's all that's left.

So those are the kinds of things that we have to focus on. That's like the fishery, secondary processing – we're missing out on millions of dollars in this province. Things should be ready for market when they leave this Island. We're shipping it off to other places and buying it back prepacked. This doesn't make any sense to me.

So when we talk about budgets, well, everybody got a budget, and the budget is you budget yourself to what you can spend. You don't overspend and then get into a situation.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to the Member.

Your time has expired.

**J. MCKENNA:** Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** I now recognize the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

**J. ABBOTT:** Thank you, Chair. I'm glad I'm not too far out of your vision. So thank you for recognizing me here this afternoon.

I just want to, obviously in my time here this afternoon, just make a few points. But first and foremost, I want to just compliment the Member for Burin - Grand Bank for setting, I think, a really historical context and one of for the relationship obviously between our province, either as a colony, as a dominion, as a province, and the relationship with the United States.

Our roots and relationships run very, very deep. I'm sure that's something obviously the president of the United States would not really understand or fathom, or even consider or be mindful of. But what he does is impacting us on so many levels.

My grandfather was a ship's carpenter who worked out of New York. So we have a lot of ties and relationships, obviously, down through the Boston States over the years. Our family, my wife's family, and many, many other families in this province can only say good things, positive things about our American neighbours. The President of the United States, for whatever reason – and if one can find it, please let me know – has decided to disrupt this relationship with Canada and, in our case, certainly Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is economic warfare, no matter what other phrase one wants to put on this. I really believe that the prime minister has called this right, that this is economic warfare to undermine our political sovereignty in the eyes of and possibly in the actions of the United States government. Hard to believe, hard to fathom but here we are.

As a province, what do we do? As a government, what can we do? As a people, what do we expect of our government, both provincial and federal?

If we can take this negative and turn it into what I think can and should be and has to be a positive, is that we are a province of endless opportunities. Members on both sides here have spoken to that at different points in this session. We have a very strong mining sector. We have a very strong offshore oil sector. We have a very strong softwood lumber sector. We have a strong information sector, a strong small-scale manufacturing sector, small-scale and home-based businesses. Most of those products are headed to the United States.

So the question is, through, this period and going forward, how are we going to support

those industries to make the adjustments that they're going to have to make, both for their survival and our economic and financial survival as a province?

If you look at what the Minister of Finance has done in terms of the Interim Supply bill is she's allocated a contingency of \$200 million to make sure we are in a position over these next few months and year that there will be some funds available to allow and to support those adjustments to start to take place. That's how I interpret that contingency.

So that's going to be important. We recognize we've got these challenges but we can, through fiscal and procurement and other measures, make sure that we can, wherever we can, support our local industries. Recently, I was on a call with the Housing minister, when I was said Housing minister for the province, and we talked about supply chain because right at this moment, one sector that is going to be hit and hit hard is the construction sector.

There are some announcements being done across the country. We're doing ours and doing a deeper dive to make sure we know the impacts. But if you are building either an apartment building or any tall structure, you need steel and a lot of the steel for the construction is sourced out of the United States. So we're going to have to pivot very quickly to make sure we can support our construction sector.

I understand in the Province of Quebec, they have changed some of their building codes to allow structures to be built higher with wood, and obviously that's something we'll need to consider. But a positive of that is, of course, that our lumber can be used in that construction across the country. So it's going to be very pivotal and important for all governments – the 13 provincial and the territorial governments working with the federal government – to look at all our supply chains for all sectors to make sure we can build those out to support all

provinces using local materials to bring that across the province.

We've been, as I think we all know, through very, very turbulent times in the past. You take any period in our history, and we have been challenged significantly by forces outside our control and we have survived and we have thrived. So we can meet this challenge.

We are a province of endless opportunities. If you look at our creativity and our innovation and how we can use the arts to obviously build out our economy, how we use our culture to build out our economy, how we use our heritage to build out our economy and to attract more tourism, and how we can invest in our youth, one, to stay here, to invest here and to support our transitions over the next number of decades – so we have those challenges, but more importantly, those opportunities in front of us.

Now I heard the Minister of Fisheries actually interviewed – it was on the radio anyway – this morning. The point he was making, which was something I certainly concur with is that yes, there are tariffs, but that doesn't mean we stop selling. That doesn't mean the Americans are going to stop buying. But we have to figure out through each sector how that's going to play out over the next weeks and months.

There was also some person on the radio for PF Collins and they do a lot of the import and export. They are the experts in how you manage the supply chain going from one country to another. They're putting on a workshop, I believe this week, to support and help inform our exporters in how to work through those challenges that are here as of yesterday.

As she said and as the Minister of Fisheries said, there are pathways through these challenges. Our exchange rate is down, has been down for a while and has dropped again. That, in one sense, is a positive. You

don't want that for an extended period of time, but it will help the impact and offset some of those tariff increases.

As the President of the United States has said, he's not stopping here and we do not know how far he is prepared to go. We can guess the worst and we have to assume the worst. As the prime minister has said, and the Premier has also said, we as a province are going to have to bear some pain. The role of government will be to mitigate that pain to the minimal degree possible.

Again, brings us back to the contingency. That is there to mitigate the negative impacts that we know are going to happen. We don't know exactly where; we don't know exactly when. So if you look at the crab fishery, is it the first shipment out or is it further down the chain? Those are the things that each sector will have to work through and we need, obviously, working tables for each one of those working under the team NL brand, enhancing that team NL brand as we need to so that we can drive the opportunities through what I would call this true misfortune.

But, you know, they're a democracy; they've elected their leader. We are a democracy; we have elected our leaders. We will be electing a new prime minister this weekend. We will be electing a new leader on this side on May 3. So there's lots of change, lots of opportunities.

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

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh):** The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you.

I'm going to stand and just have a few words on the Interim Supply. This is something that we all are going to vote for,

and this is to carry on the government for the next three months after.

This is an issue, of course, that comes all during the budget time, and we always hear about now the tariffs on Canada and all around the world mainly and it was almost brought up today: well, what are we bringing up other issues for because the tariffs were on? It's kind of discouraging, actually – actually discouraging.

Before I start, you see us bringing up issues here on behalf of the constituents, but there's a lot of back and forth that we always work together. The Members for Windsor Lake, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Burin - Grand Bank, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville and Burgeo - La Poile: I just look across, that's just the five I see, we always work together. We may stand up and have words back and forth but when it's the day, we try to help each other. That's the way government should work.

But I take it very seriously and I take it very personal when I hear the Leader of the Opposition standing up and asking questions and you almost get put down or be condescended upon because you're asking questions other than the tariffs – the health care.

I challenged, and I still do, any minister over there who wants to come out and have a public meeting about the hospital in Corner Brook, the new Western Memorial, the emergency department – I challenge anyone. It won't happen. I got to say the minister, I think he's Windsor Lake, he does respond. I got to give him credit, he does try to do the best he can. I know his hands are tied sometimes but there are options that we could've done years ago that wasn't done.

So if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board don't think we should be talking about health care because of the tariffs, come out to Corner Brook, Deputy

Premier. Come out and I'll arrange the meeting for you.

**P. LANE:** She just nodded her head. She's going to do it.

**E. JOYCE:** No, she won't do it.

The Member for St. George's - Humber, you're getting the same calls I am, you know the same issues but yet there's nothing being done. The Premier of the province is getting the same calls. I was working on one for the Premier's district just two weeks ago. I can't get into details, but I finally wrote the Premier and said this is your constituent. The office in Deer Lake went on a week without returning a call to him.

The Member for Corner Brook is hearing it. That's why he went out publicly and said: Oh no, no, the 45 beds that they put up is not good enough; we need a long-term care, because of the concerns.

For any Member here to stand up in this House and say: Oh, it should be the tariffs – which is major. It's going to affect a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, but there's nothing major when you're lying in a hallway with a commode next to you with people walking by in the hallway. There's nothing worse.

They can't get in a bed; I hear it on a daily basis. Even this morning I sent off emails to say there's got to be something done – this morning. It's happening on a regular basis, and I say to the government, they knew about the situation a long time ago. They knew it back in 2017, 2018 when they were first supposed to build the hospital. Then, changes started creeping into the hospital in 2018. Things were taken out. Laundry was taken out. The PET scanner was taken out.

Some other things were actually taken out and that's where a lot of the issues – because at the time, and I just want to put this on the record, the demographic showed

that up to 2031, seniors are going to be up to this level that we're going to need places for long-term care. After 2031 – I'm going on memory – it starts declining, but from the time, that 2018 or 2019 when the final design of the hospital was done, there wasn't the infrastructure put in place. Then there are some bungalows home now that take care of a lot of the people with dementia, there was supposed to be extra bungalows built but they weren't built.

The crisis started when they make an announcement, first of all, turning over the key. They knew the minute the hospital, in that June, was going to be open, that there was a problem with the long-term care patients taking up acute-care beds. Then when they opened the hospital, and they made the big announcement and cut the ribbon out in front of the hospital, when they moved all the patients over –

**P. LANE:** Were you invited?

**E. JOYCE:** No. I wasn't invited, no.

**P. LANE:** What?

**E. JOYCE:** No, I wasn't invited.

Then, when they moved over about 65 or 66 long-term care patients in acute-care beds, that's when the crunch started.

This is what I'm saying to government: Listen to the people – listen, it's their health care. And if any of us here in this room, the worst thing that we ever get is when someone is in a crisis with health care. If there's a road, we can say okay, be careful, it'd be nice. But when you're in health care and one person I know had to fly to St. John's, couldn't get in because they couldn't get a bed in St. John's. The doctor had to write on it: Needs emergency. They couldn't get in St. John's.

So I take it personal when I'm almost being told: What are you doing talking about health care when we have this crisis going

on in government? I'll say something on this record now, and I hope I'm wrong but I don't think I will be. We have right now with the tariffs it's going to hit Newfoundland and Labrador, no doubt. We all agree it is. I'm willing to bet that the government opposite will close this House down and will not follow through on the Parliamentary Calendar that we set so we can discuss it.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I'm willing to bet. I am willing to bet. No, no, on a serious note. So when you talk about how serious this is why doesn't the government – I think it was brought up earlier today – put in a private Member's resolution right now so we all could stand and vote and have a good speech on it?

I say to the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, just before you were over in the corner I was saying that you're one of the ministers that we may banter back and forth, but you do well working together to get stuff done. When I looked across there were five there and that was the five that, and you're one of them, I just want to let you know that was mentioned here that we do.

But I'm willing to bet the place where we can offer opinion, the place where we're going to get the media outside – not me, the leaders of the parties and other people here, the critics and the government Members, can get the media to show how unified we are is when the House of Assembly is open when you go out in the scrums and the media is here.

I'm willing to bet – and if I'm wrong, I'll stand and say I apologize, I'm wrong – we will not be sitting in this House until the end of May for the Parliamentary Calendar. So please don't come off on me, and the Opposition, and the Third Party, to say we're not asking enough questions about the tariff when you're going to close this House.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Impossible, there are too many important things.

**E. JOYCE:** I'm willing to bet.

The other thing, just on another note, this morning the government tried to – I guess the Deputy Government House Leader – extend the House today and they never had enough Members to do it, and the vote was turned down. Out of vindictiveness, just being vindictive, the government then broke the Parliamentary Calendar and said we're going to sit Friday, look what you did. Just over on Friday. Then you wonder why people get cynical and the reason why they're doing it on Friday. They have some major bills that they need to get through this House because they're going to close the House of Assembly, I guarantee you.

The other reason why they're going to close the House of Assembly is people like me who are bringing up the issues about the emergency department in Corner Brook, bringing up the issues of the lack of doctors in Corner Brook, bringing up issues about nurse practitioners who were in Alberta and they got over 63 set up and in Newfoundland we're doing none.

The seniors who got to pay and can't afford to go and get their bloodwork. They can't afford to get it done and can't afford the doctor, so what do they do? They go to emergency. What happens at emergency? It becomes full and it's just a domino effect. The Member from St. George's - Humber, you're hearing it because I'm getting calls from your constituents, by the way.

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

**E. JOYCE:** What?

Okay. Listen, thank you –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Oh, sorry about that.

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

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

**S. REID:** Thank you, Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to speak on this very important piece of legislation today. Interim Supply is a wide-ranging debate. It's a bill which provides for the money to keep government operating while government is putting forward a budget and debating a budget here in the House.

The amount of money involved here is staggering. It's close to \$4 billion involved in this piece of legislation and we're up against the timeline, the end of the fiscal year, that this piece of legislation has to be approved so that government employees continue to get paid and that bills government has get paid as well.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Tell us what day (Inaudible).

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**S. REID:** I think it's around March 21.

This is a Finance bill, so people are able to bring up any issues they have and any items. Finance bills have wide-ranging debates. People can speak about anything related to finances, so it's a good opportunity for people to talk about things that are important to them.

Many people this year are talking about the issue of the day. That does not mean that other issues aren't important or that they don't exist or anything like that. We're having a debate here about many different things and it's good to hear what people are having to say and the issues they're bringing forward. That's what this House is all about. It's having an opportunity to bring forward the issues that people have raised with us.

But I think this year we're dealing with a situation that's, in many ways, unprecedented. The issue we're dealing with in terms of tariffs is something that has an impact on all parts of the province, and all parts of the country, indeed. And maybe the whole world. So it's something that we should be talking about as well, because this issue is going to have overarching impacts on this province and this country.

I was listening to some of the things that the Members opposite were saying. I listened to the Member for Exploits last night, I think. He was talking about agriculture. It is something that I'm very interested in. My district as well is a big agriculture district. It's one of the biggest agriculture districts in the province.

So I was listening intently to what he was saying. I agree with some of the things he was saying, most of what he was saying, almost all the things that he said. Basically he was saying that we need to be more sustainable in this province. We need to grow and produce the things that we eat here in this province. That's something that we agree on.

We look at, how do we do that; how do we grow more things in this province? Some of the things that we've been doing as a government over the years is doing research into various crops, how they can grow in the province. We've been investing in farmers, farm equipment. We've been clearing new pieces of land for agriculture. We've been helping farmers get better storage facilities here in this province. We've been supporting farmers' markets and things like that over the years. I think this crisis that we're facing now from the US with tariffs, we have to look at this as an opportunity maybe to continue doing those things and to continue increasing the agriculture production in this province.

I think that's some of the things that we've been doing and some of the things that

have become more and more important. So I think I agree with the Member for Exploits.

I was interested in listening to the Minister of Tourism here last night or yesterday I think. He was talking about the impact that this has on tourism. He encouraged people to welcome the people from the US who come here, welcome them as individuals as they come here. That's a very interesting thing to say and a very important thing to say as well because while we may have a lot of differences with the current President of the United States, I think it's important to recognize and celebrate the relationships that we have to the United States as a country historically and also with individuals throughout the United States.

Many of us have interacted with people from the US and had positive reactions and positive back and forth with people from the United States, so it's important that we do that. In terms of tourism, I think, as well as with things like seafood – the Minister of Fisheries talked about today the need to have a protection for some of the people in the fisheries industry. He also talked about the need to look at new markets and new avenues of continuing to export but maybe to not be so reliant on the US market, and I think that's another positive thing that we've been doing that may be exhilarated by the fact that we're into this situation that we're in now.

In terms of tourism, I remember the Minister of Tourism talked about the importance of these new flights that we have going into Paris and Dublin, I believe, and London, and the impact that that could have. If you look at it, lobster is the biggest fishery in my district in terms of value. Most of those lobsters are sold live in the New England States. The potential is that that market might be disrupted, so we have to look at new options of where we can sell our lobsters in the world and what we have to do to get our seafood products into those markets.

I've talked to several people in the seafood industry about how we have to change the way we market our seafood products and how we have to get in there and look at other markets as well. That's something else that I think we have been incentivised by this crisis that we're currently in, and how it changes the way we think and how it changes the way we continue to bring forward our economy.

I listened to the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and he told us a very important story there about the relationship we have with the US and other people have talked about the 9/11 situation, the impact that we have had and the relationship that we have built up with people from the US over the years. I think that's a very important thing to remember while we're in this situation. I think there is hope and there will be an end to this situation that we're in now.

I think President Obama used to say: There's nothing wrong with America that can't be fixed by what's right with America. So I think we have to realize that this too will pass. We have gone through a number of difficult situations as a province, as a people and we will get through this situation by being smart, being resilient and that's because that's the type of people we are.

Thank you very much.

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

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I guess first and foremost, I'll make it my tradition: It is a pleasure to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people I represent in Conception Bay South. I'm in my 10th year and it's been an honour and it's a privilege.

Like a lot of people in this Legislature, we come in together and we forget sometimes

that the years are starting to add up, but it's thanks to our residents that we represent that keep us here and I never take it for granted. I've always been honoured every time I stand in the House to speak. I do speak for my party and I represent my roles but, ultimately, I speak for the people I represent in my district and that's what I'll continue to do.

Chair, I listened to a lot of debate and there's a lot on the go in the media. Not only just this week; it's been going on for the last number of weeks, the last month or two. There's been a lot and I hear some of the debate, I hear some the rhetoric and it's a lot of everything; there's a lot of all that stuff. We came in this Legislature yesterday and we asked really good questions. Not because it was just yesterday. We try to ask good questions every day because it's important and our role. I thought our questions yesterday were on the mark for a lot of issues, like mental health questions. We asked about the land deal. People have concerns. This is talk on the street; this is coffee-shop talk.

We issued a letter yesterday morning. It was about the tariffs related with the fisheries and our Fisheries critic actually spoke to media on that as well. It's a balancing act in our role; we have to try to hit all the marks. We can't be a one-issue Opposition. Because, as people realize, government has to be kept in check and Oppositions do that. No matter what party, what Legislature you sit in, it's the role of Opposition; it's a very important role.

We get challenged, I guess, for want of a better word. How come you're not asking us questions relating to tariffs? It's a good reason why that happens. You witnessed it today during Question Period. We never got any answers. We got a lot of bluster and a lot of remarks and a lot of grandstanding. There was, you know, people getting on their soapbox. That may be an important issue to the public. They are not looking for that. You go back and you listen to answers,

you watch the recordings, we asked a lot of questions. Today we asked a lot of questions. I don't think we got many answers.

We asked a lot of questions about the so-called – what the minister or Deputy Premier quotes as being the most important issue – one of the most important issues she ever faced.

**S. COADY:** Of the day.

**B. PETTEN:** The most important issue of the day. But I question and I caution the minister. Yes, it's an important issue. We get that; we all understand that. But never minimize health care with any issue.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Since my time as taking over as the shadow minister of Health, and as time has gone on and as more time goes on, the more they bring issues to light, my inbox is full. I kid you not. I mean, I only can imagine what goes into the Department of Health. I know I got an idea, but it's unbelievable. But those are full of personal stories – personal, personal stories, heartbreaking stories, personal tragedies.

I read some of them. They bother you; they affect you. You have to read them, because I respond to every email. I don't just farm it out; I respond to every email. Some of them are lengthy emails. They're really long; they're heart-wrenching emails. But I listen to them and I talk to these people and I respond to their emails as best as I can.

So for anybody, especially the Deputy Premier, to minimize health care. When you're minimizing health care, it's a major insult to the people of this province because those people who are suffering under our health care system now, tariffs are not their number one issue.

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

**B. PETTEN:** They're very important, but that's not their number one issue.

In my lifetime, I grew up around a lot of, I think, wise people. One quote that stuck with me all my life has been, they look at you and say if you don't have health, you have nothing. You can have all the money in the world, but if you don't have your health, you have nothing. Tariffs are monetary. Tariffs are a tax. Tariffs are wrong. Nobody disagrees on that. We're all in unison on that.

But health care has to remain, in my mind, it always got to be on the top of the list. Everything else is important. Cost of living, public safety, tariffs, they're all important. Polling will show you that tariffs are top of mind of most Canadians; they're in the top two and three. But health care will remain forever, in my mind, top of mind for people in this province, for people in this country, people in this world. If you don't have your health, you have nothing.

So I take great offence to the minister and the Deputy Premier to make that comment today, because that's politics – that's politics. She was challenging us that we never asked questions on tariffs. The leader of our party, the Leader of the Opposition asked them questions today and we got nothing back – nothing. There's liquor being taken off the shelf. There are these gaudy buttons that are out there. We have nothing else. We asked questions about health care and Teladoc contracts. What about those? We got a response back and they're looking at procurement for (inaudible).

They got a letter wrote. We don't know who wrote it, we don't know when it was wrote, we don't know which minister wrote it, and we don't know who the minister is. But there's a letter wrote. We find out later, I think it was a letter wrote when they come through the door. But we don't know who the Minister of Health is. We're still trying to figure that out. We don't know, it could be anyone tomorrow. I don't know what we're

going to get when we ask Housing questions because that minister is in the backbenches now. It's a government total disarray.

To my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands who made reference to this motion to sit Friday and this vote to sit tonight that they lost this morning, and the vindictiveness of trying to sit Friday, that's fine. I told some of my colleagues government has that ability. I always said government, they control that. They can make a motion to sit Saturday and Sunday if they want.

But the goal is to get out of here. That's always been the goal. Since the House opened on Monday, they want to get out – they want to get out. They never had enough people in this Legislature this morning to vote a simple motion to sit tonight. They don't want to be here – they don't want to be here. We've got people across the way waiting to announce they're running federally. When you run federally, you have to step down provincially, and they only got 21 Members. They don't have the numbers. It's total disarray.

There are a handful over there, I think, that are committed and going to come here every day. They don't have the votes. Here you are dealing with a money bill, Interim Supply. We're not going to vote against Interim Supply, caution to the wind. We're not going to do that. We'll wait until you get your house in order one of these days, if you ever do. You eventually have to call an election. We're not planning on doing that.

But we've used four or five hours, we used seven or eight, we could use 12 or 13. We got the numbers figured out, we're not in a rush. The 21st of March to get Interim Supply. That's all you need. This is the 6th of March. We have 15 days. Now we have to sit every night and on Fridays to get it done and what for? You need a gas tax by April 1. This is March 6; you've got 25 days. The Parliamentary Calendar takes us up to

the end of May, so who are you fooling? You aren't fooling me, and I don't think you're fooling anyone over here and I don't think you're fooling anyone out there. Like, this is the mockery that's been made in this Legislature.

To my point earlier, and a lot of others have shared it with me, I've been here for 10 years watching this. I'll make it clear to anyone out there: I have had enough of Opposition after 10 years, we would like to get on that other side and get things right because what we're seeing now is a tired government, they're passed their best before date, the leader is missing in action, he's gone abroad. Captain Canada up with a flag wrapped around him up in Alberta or Ottawa somewhere. We don't know where he's to; he left the building. He's left the building. They got Elvis left the building; he left the building. Dad left; he's gone. There's no one in charge, there are ministers rolling here.

We even had an announcement today out in the lobby out there, they were all lined up, the media were lined up, the Minister of Fisheries was stood up and a big scrum. Guess what he was there for? He was announcing he wasn't running for the Leader of the Liberal Party.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Now is this about tariffs? Is this about the Liberal leadership? No, it's about the Minister of Fisheries, the Member for Corner Brook, it's all about him. It's all about him.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Photo op.

**B. PETTEN:** It's a photo op, yeah. The photo op.

Now my colleague, the former Government House Leader, at least now we're questioning that he's still getting paid. I get that, and they can deal with that. He stepped away, he's thinking it over, he's

going to make an announcement. He's sitting in the back row, and he hasn't been engaged, like, in the conversation, and I'm okay with that. I think we've talked about point of privilege and the Speaker ruled on that, we can't control that. But at least stood back –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What did he do?

**B. PETTEN:** But listen –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What did he do?

**B. PETTEN:** He never had a media availability to say he was stepping back. He never had the foyer full of media telling them he's stepping back. He just put out a tweet or a – yeah, I think it was a tweet that he was stepping back. I respect that. The Minister of Housing yesterday went out in the foyer, and he said I'm running. I respect that. But to watch someone stand in the House –

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

**B. PETTEN:** – lobby and do that is disrespectful.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate.

**L. DEMPSTER:** If there were theatrics awards being passed out today, I think there is no question where the award would go today.

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

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** There's no question where the award would go.

Chair, I'm going to change the tone significantly for a moment because, like many people here in this city this morning, when I came in to work and I flipped up my social media, I saw that a very beloved daughter of this capital city of our province had passed away, and I can't start my few minutes in Interim Supply without mentioning Debbie Hanlon. I doubt there is anybody in this space today, in this Parliament –

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Debbie, there are so many things we could say about Debbie but there's nothing we can say that haven't already been said.

She was a champion, she was a fighter, she served, her family supported her to serve. We know we say it all the time, it's a privilege to serve, it's also a price to serve. Many of us who have been around MNL events, we could see Debbie. She was just full of life when she graced the floor or when she graced the dance floor if it was an evening event. On behalf of my team here today in this Legislature and probably my colleague who would have served with her, maybe, at the city level, Minister for Justice and Public Safety.

I want to say on behalf of our caucus that our heartfelt condolences are certainly with Debbie's family.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** After 79 days in hospital, five days ago she was happy to go home and I'm glad that she got to go home and anyway we're certainly thinking about Debbie.

Today, I'm going to just use the rest of my time to talk a little bit about Interim Supply. It's pretty routine business every year as we're leading up to budget prep. Once you're in government, you know that budget prep takes months and months of work; we

usually start late in the fall, led by the Finance Minister, who puts her shoulder to the wheel with her team. It's a pretty heavy lift when you're getting ready to do a budget for this province.

So as that moves along, we want to ensure that we pass Interim Supply so that the operations within this province continue. When I think about that, I think about the nurses and the teachers, the transportation workers. And of course, I'm always looking through the lens of the people that I represent in the beautiful district, the beautiful people in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, and I've had such a privilege. I'm coming up on 12 years. I'm still very humble to say that.

I just had a wonderful weekend in my district where we celebrated with NunatuKavut an Annual General Assembly, and it was just people there from all across Labrador and people from the Island and it's like one big family. We spend two days that are the best two days you could ever have in a whole year; we celebrate our culture, our tradition, our heritage. This year, we had the Bigland Trapper, who was back home, who once spent 84 days north in the Arctic Circle in that season Alone, and he was like a big celebrity there. I told him if he had been charging \$10 for every picture that was taken, he certainly could've had a great fundraiser there. But it was just a wonderful time.

I also had the privilege to drive down to Forteau and present a number of long-service awards. I think I had seven or eight firefighters that we presented awards to that had served for 40 years – 40 years serving their community. What a noble thing to be doing, when most people are running away from a fire and they're running in. I just have so much time and respect for the people that keep the wheels turning in our little communities.

I say it all the time: We couldn't do our job if we didn't have those people on the ground,

volunteering their time, stepping up, submitting applications in the system, then reaching out to their MHA to say this is in, can you push it over the finish line. I just love, despite the fact, Chair, for me to represent my people, last weekend as an example, I spent 1,540 kilometres of driving and I flew six hours, and I did multiple events. My city colleagues are really fortunate if they get to drive five or six minutes home, because it really is a big effort. I'm lucky that my family supports me and continues to support me to do that.

So I want to toss a bouquet to the nurses in our little communities who work alone in a clinic, to the teachers who, they come into MUN or Corner Brook, wherever they go, and they take a degree to teach, but when you come to Labrador in these small schools, you do so much more than that. After school you're offering your time to do the extra curricular, you're helping your students fundraise so they can participate somewhere on the Island.

Then there's Transportation, Chair. My husband has been with Transportation since 1999. I'm not sure how many years that makes it; it must be 25 years, 26 years. Often alone on the Trans-Labrador Highway, many times he has come up on serious accidents, he has come up on tragedies. Just recently, again, spending about six hours alone in a terrible circumstance and I worry about that with him, but he loves what he does – a difficult job. He's got to make a call with the best information he's got at the time. If a storm is coming, do I close the road?

Sometimes he will close it and we don't get the weather that was called and they'll say missed the ferry; missed my good appointment; you closed the road. Sometimes he won't close it. If the weather is worse, he's pulling out a vehicle in the morning. I'm speaking about him because that's the life we have lived for 2½ decades in our home. I do have so much respect for the people who served, the majority of

people, their heart and their intentions are in the right place and their ethic is solid, Chair.

I want to mention, moving on from the Interim Supply bit, I just want to say in my closing that like many others, even though it was a long day, I, too, went home and watched the president's speech last night. I think that yesterday was a historic moment in the life of our country. It is a very, very serious, Chair, I believe, that our very sovereignty is threatened. Tough to watch.

When there's a long list of things that the President of the United States has pulled out – and I just made a quick list here, the things I heard last night. Things like the Paris Agreement, things like the Human Rights Council, things like the World Health Organization. That's all hogwash. You have to really wonder where we're headed.

Somebody said yesterday, I'd like to go back to unprecedented times, because when we were navigating COVID and things like that, it seemed serious and we were in unprecedented times, but I'll tell you we are in unfamiliar territory but what we need to do is we need to plan. People look to their leaders in times of crisis for stability. They look for hope, and it's important that we provide that, Chair.

Also when he talked so flippantly about Greenland and he says, one way or another, we will get Greenland. You have to wonder where we're headed, Chair. You have to pay attention.

As a part of this Interim Supply today, the Finance Minister, through her work, we've attached \$200 million in contingency. That's called planning, because we don't know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know what next week will bring, but I can tell you, Chair, that it is time for Canada to reclaim its place with confidence in this world.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** It has never been more important before, for people across party lines to stand together as we face an uncertain future, to stand tall as very proud Canadians. Yes, I believe we will win. We've weathered many things.

What's happening right now is certainly concerning and, as a government, we will plan. We know that small businesses will hurt. We know the people are wondering what's going to happen in the fishery. That is why we are trying to get Interim Supply through to keep the wheels rolling.

I've heard Members here today say, oh, you know you're trying to get out and you're trying to push it through. So I looked up the last two, three years to see how long did it take us before we voted on Interim Supply. The best I could see was under one day – under one day. So it's not unreasonable for us to say let's come in and let's debate the Interim Supply and let's get it passed so that the wonderful people who serve this province can continue to do the work that they love to do.

I think I'm being told to clue up with that, and I think that I have covered most of what I wanted to say. I look forward to being on my feet again, maybe a number of times, depending how long Interim Supply goes today in this House.

Thank you for the opportunity, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to take a couple of minutes because I heard a comment from my colleague next to me here who talked about the House possibly closing early, and I was absolutely dumbfounded. That has to be impossible and let me tell you why. This Liberal government who have closed the

House early in the past, decides when the House opens and when the House closes.

This year's sitting, March 3 to March 20, 15 days – fantastic. This is where the people's business takes place. Our job is to ensure that the people are taken care of in this province, the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are taken care of right here. March 3 to the 20, 15 days; March 31 to April 17, 15 days; May 12 to the 29; 14 days. That's a lot of days that we have left of sitting to ensure that the people's business is taken care of right here in the House of Assembly.

I have to disagree, respectfully, with my learned colleague, because I've watched the Minister of Finance stand up today and take her place, and she was so adamant – so adamant – that the tariffs are going to have such an impact on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Not only the tariffs, international unrest, health care crisis, education crisis, housing crisis, cost-of-living crisis. The fishery is about to go back. It is impossible that this House can close early with this many issues for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There would be only one reason for this House to close early, and that's personal agendas. Personal agendas do not run this Legislature.

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

**C. TIBBS:** The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, their agenda runs this House of Assembly, not personal agendas. If personal agendas run this House of Assembly and this House closes early, you do not deserve to govern.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

Sorry, I'm ahead of myself again. I'm still wound up from speaking a few moments ago on Interim Supply.

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

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Is it the pleasure of the Committee to accept 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 the Committee of Supply.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters referred to them and has asked leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed them to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again? Tomorrow?

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned  
until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.