



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 104

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Thursday

March 6, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Good afternoon, everyone.

First of all, in the public gallery I'd like to welcome the high school improv group, the King's Jesters, that are joining us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Torngat Mountains, Waterford Valley, Baie Verte - Green Bay and Topsail - Paradise.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as a veteran, I'm extremely proud to stand today and congratulate two students from Holy Cross School in Eastport that have been awarded the opportunity of a lifetime.

Ava Burden, a Grade 12 student, was selected through a nomination process. Ava is a leader, a high achiever in her school, active in the community, and she was this year's Eastport Peninsula Agricultural Exhibition Ambassador.

Noah Squire, a Grade 9 student, wrote a very impressive essay that shared a true story of his great-great-great uncle, Lewis, who enlisted in the military when he was only 18 years old in World War I.

Both Ava and Noah were chosen to participate in the Historic Site's Association Ambassador Program, along with 14 other

students. They will tour World War I battle sites in France and Belgium, promoting and learning about Newfoundland heritage and history. They will follow the Trail of the Caribou and will visit sites where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment fought and sacrificed for us all.

From experience, I know this will be a life-changing experience for them. I can't wait to meet them when they return to hear all about it.

"They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We will remember them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to acknowledge Nain's 75th Anniversary of Confederation Medal recipients.

Sarah Abel worked 24 years with OKâlaKatigêt Society, Newfoundland and Labrador's only broadcasting agency that provides all information and entertainment via radio and television in both Inuktitut and English. Their mandate: preserve and promote the language and culture of the Inuit.

Sarah worked tirelessly providing consistency within OKâlaKatigêt, dedicating 24 years, which contributed to the survival and helped grow it into an award-winning language and culture keeper.

Joanna Dicker worked 27 years with OKâlaKatigêt. Joanna passed away this year and her family humbly accepted her medal of recognition of her lifetime contribution to the Inuit people.

Small in stature, highly respected, Joanna ensured younger employees learned proper work ethic and, most importantly, showed respect to people when reporting news and public information. Joanna also contributed greatly to Moravian church. The late Jerry Sillitt asked Joanna to ensure church traditions were properly passed on. She did, quietly.

Edna Winters, 29 years working with health and social development, first with LIA, then Nunatsiavut Government. Edna continues to help people, mostly behind the scenes, providing social and mental health supports. Edna helps Nain deal with great tragedy and continues to be the rock of support and advocacy.

Please join me in applauding the contribution of Sarah, Joanna and Edna.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, we celebrate an incredible achievement by a truly outstanding group of young athletes, the St. John's Bosco Eagles Grade 4, 5 and 6 girls, who won a perfect 5-0 to capture the Grade 6B Newfoundland and Labrador provincial basketball championship.

From the first tipoff to the final buzzer, these girls displayed remarkable teamwork, resilience and sportsmanship. Every game tested their skills but they never backed down. They supported each other, played

with heart and proved that hard work and determination certainly leads to greatness.

These young athletes have shown us what it means to give your best, no matter the odds. They played with passion, represented their school with pride and demonstrated true champions are built on effort, respect and teamwork.

To our champions, the St. John Bosso Eagles: Michelle, Maya, Paisley, Charlotte, Aubree, Makayla, Bria, Ella, Anna, Eva and Kylie, and to the coaches Joey and Melissa, the parents and supporters, thank you for your guidance and faith. Your encouragement made this journey possible. Good luck for next season and I'm sure these Grade 6 girls already have a spot secured on their next junior team.

Eagles, the future is bright.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, Avery Clance, La Scie – two weeks ago, La Scie Sport and Recreation decided to initiate a fundraiser, a skate-a-thon, to raise funds for their arena programming on the Cape John Peninsula.

During that appeal for participants, a singular skater stepped forward, nine-year-old Avery Clance. Avery has been skating on a regular basis since she's been old enough to lace up her own skates. Her pop, Dave Martin, now takes her almost nightly for evening skates at the La Scie Arena.

Undaunted by being the sole participant, Avery set off to raise money and went door-to-door canvassing as she tenaciously sought support for her passion, skating. In raising over \$700 in a week, she is an inspirational example of dedication and commitment to community. Nine-year-old

Avery has reminded all of us that one person, regardless of age, can truly make a difference.

Avery's story now percolates across her school and the Baie Verte Peninsula and hopefully, with this statement, across our province. In the Year of Sport in Newfoundland and Labrador, Avery's love of sport and recreation will hopefully foster a lasting impact on volunteerism across more communities.

I invite all MHAs from our 50th Assembly to salute with me Ms. Avery Clance from La Scie for her inspiring community mindedness.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Speaker, recently I had the pleasure of meeting the King's Jesters, a group of high school improv students based in Paradise and the Conception Bay South area.

After winning their regional tournament, the King's Jesters will now represent Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2025 Canadian Improv Games national tournament in Ottawa this April. During the Canadian Improv National Festival, students develop valuable life skills, forge lasting connections and grow in a supportive and inclusive community. The festival offers specialized workshops and learning opportunities from experienced improvisors and instructors from across Canada.

This group consists of nine students who are passionate and dedicated to the arts. Not only did they win the regional competition, they also won the Spirit of the Games award, which is given to a team that embodies the spirit of improv, a team that is recognized for camaraderie displayed within their team and with other teams at the competition.

Speaker, the King's Jesters are represented by Jess Hynes, Keely Brien, Jaxon Ferrie, Emma Neubert, Meadow Baker, Logan Savory, Liam Forristall, Danika Hodder and Olivia Schaab. I want to congratulate the King's Jesters and wish them all the best as they represent the province at the national competition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise to recognize March 8 as International Women's Day.

This day serves as a reminder of the incredible strides made towards gender equality, while recognizing there is still work to do. This day also honours the achievements, strengths and resilience of women who have shaped history and who have broken barriers, from the suffragists who fought for the right to vote to scientists, artists and the leaders of today.

Our government places a high priority on creating a society where women and girls can pursue their dreams, unlock their potential, drive innovation and live freely from discrimination and violence.

The Canadian theme for 2025, Strength in Every Story, is quite fitting here in Newfoundland and Labrador, as this year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of women achieving the right to vote and hold public office.

We must thank Armine Gosling for leading the charge for this right. She knew that the voices of women mattered, and when we

stood together, things would change for the better.

Speaker, we will continue to rise, keep inspiring, and we will continue to break glass ceilings, so that every woman and girl here in Newfoundland and Labrador can live a life of dignity, respect and empowerment.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you to the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

As we commemorate International Women's Day, we pause to reflect on the important strides we've made, especially as we mark a century since women gained the right to vote. This milestone is a testament to the resilience and determination of women who came before us, but it also illuminates the ongoing challenges we face here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

While we celebrate progress, it's crucial to acknowledge that our work is far from complete. Women and gender-diverse individuals still encounter significant barriers, particularly in achieving equitable pay and opportunities.

The prolonged delay by the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality in implementing essential regulations on pay equity legislation is disheartening. Advocates have expressed serious concerns about the hasty nature of the proposed legislation, describing it as inadequate.

We cannot afford to be complacent. Action is required now. Let us stand united in our demand for progress, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister in advance for a copy of the statement.

The minister is right, there is still work to be done and it's by her own government that it needs to be done. Women, gender-diverse people and other equity-seeking groups representing more than half of our population are still waiting for pay equity and transparency legislation 2½ years after we first debated it here in the House. We call on government to quit stalling and get the job done. We also call on government to call gender-based violence for what it is, an epidemic.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, once again, and again last night, we hear from the president acting as a dictator of the United States who changes his mind about what tariffs will be included or won't be implemented. But we also know that the minister has told us that our government has \$200 million set aside to deal with these tariffs.

We've known about these senseless tariffs that are coming for more than a month now and while we've heard some details about what the \$200 million might be used for, I ask today and I ask the minister: Can you tell us what initiatives specifically have you implemented today to deal with this tariff situation in our province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I think the Member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, has it right; we don't know. The volatility is high in the United States right now with regard to tariffs. We have to be united; we have to be strong. The concerns around sovereignty are very, very real. This government is taking it very seriously.

We have increased our trade missions and envoys. We have engaged a robust committee of community leaders, business leaders and union leaders to address the concerns around this. We have worked very diligently to lower internal trade barriers. We have put, as the Member opposite spoke of, \$200 million in contingency.

What we will use that money for is what we will need to use that money for. At this point in time, there's still a lot of volatility and uncertainty and we don't have the full array of what we need to use it for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

While tariffs are important and people are concerned, they're also concerned about health care, and rightly so. Our office has obtained a memo from the CEO of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services organization to all management

confirming a \$50-million cut to the health care budget.

Will the minister tell this House exactly when did government order this massive cut to health care in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I haven't seen the memo specifically that the Member opposite refers to; what, however, is there is a long-standing understanding that year on year there would be reductions in health care expenditure under certain heads.

I believe, and I stand to be corrected, that this memo refers to the 2024 arrangement for that reduction for that fiscal year as part of a five-year program.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, no matter what way you cut it a reduction is a reduction, a cut is a cut. I want to quote directly from the memo, it says: For the '24-'25 budget year, we have also been given a \$50-million savings target.

Can the minister table a list of the front-line programs and services that have been cut to meet this so-called savings target?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

If you go back over the last three years, you'll see that year-on-year spending in health, both budgeted and actual, has increased year upon year. Currently, the NLHS is around \$200 million over budget and their lines of credit have just been extended. Indeed, I signed the letter this morning to extend Central Zone's line of credit for a further period. We're working to amalgamate those lines of credit and to rationalize them but there is a need to look at spending, seriously, because it is higher than it should be with the budget they've got.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's not just about the numbers, of course. It's about patient care and that's what's important here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Can the minister table how many procedures have been postponed as a direct result of this \$50 million slash to the budget?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

This \$50 million is related to efficiencies, combining all four RHAs into one. There have been no front-line cuts, none are proposed and in actual fact, as far as surgical procedures are concerned, I do believe there's been a greater than 20 per cent, nearly 30 per cent increase in the number of surgeries done in the last 12 months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I ask again: How many jobs have been cut as a direct result of this \$50 million reduction in the budget?

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

J. HAGGIE: None. Our vacancy rate has dropped.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: In that case, Speaker, I ask the minister: How many vacancies still exist within the health care system in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador? Are they not being filled because you're deliberately trying to save money on the backs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As to the exact vacancy numbers, I can certainly get those figures. I will actually inform the House, yet again, that in the last 18 months we have an additional 1,133 nurses in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, you could go to places all over rural Newfoundland and Labrador and they will tell you about the positions that have not been filled in health care facilities all over rural parts of

Newfoundland and Labrador, that are still waiting to be filled. Simply putting an ad on your website is not recruiting. That's simply putting an ad up and saying you're actively recruiting; that doesn't cut it.

Again, I ask the question: How many more are on the chopping block and will not be posted or will not be filled because of this action that the government has told them to take?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

An additional, that is extra, that is more than the previous period, 1,133 nurses. That is an increase, not a decrease. There are no jobs on the chopping block. We are posting jobs and I accept the Member opposite's comment that in actual fact simply posting an ad does not work, which is why we are working with NLHS to rationalize our recruiting structure, between the department which has its own section and the NLHS which has multiple sections and we're going to bring them together and we're going to do it better and we're going to get better results.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, \$50 million is \$50 million, a cut is a cut. Any dollar coming out of health care, is a dollar too many. You're looking at \$50 million of savings. It's impossible for that not to have an effect on the delivery of health care in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I have been contacted by multiple families whose children are stuck on the ever-growing wait-

list for the Janeway eye clinic. The situation is so bad that families aren't even being given appointment times anymore. I've been told that this is due to shortage of staff.

I ask the minister: When the Liberal Government slashed the \$50 million from health care, did they even consider the consequences?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

No one has lost a job because of any alleged cuts. These savings are when you have four sets of HR departments, four sets of procurement departments and four sets of backroom administrative staff. These can be amalgamated and over a period of time, through attrition, you can achieve those savings. This was the rationale that was out there in the Health Accord. Facts of the case are, we are making progress. We're not there yet, but we have recruited extra front-line staff compared with a period over a year ago: 1,133 nurses and over 140 physicians. That is progress.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Fifty million dollars is \$50 million, Speaker, and it's coming from health care.

Speaker, I will table a letter one family received and I quote directly from it: "... due to the excessive number of patients on the waitlist, you may have an extended wait time." This family was referred by an ophthalmologist and now fears their daughter may go blind while waiting for care.

Will the minister reverse this \$50 million cut so children can get the treatment they

urgently need and the proper number of employed to deliver this service?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We've been working with the ophthalmology community to manage wait-lists and help them deal with their wait-list. We have actually recruited two new ophthalmologists over the last two years and the numbers of providers have stabilized. We are delighted with the collaboration we've had from the ophthalmologists and we're looking at mechanisms, such as central intake, which will help deal with some of these delays.

What I can say is that the wait-list for cataracts has gone down dramatically because of money we have put in, not taken out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Cataract surgeries are not helping the children at the Janeway eye clinic, I respectfully tell the minister. And it's the assistants to the ophthalmologists that do the measurements, this is the staffing that's missing; without them, the ophthalmologists can't do their job. And it's the Janeway eye clinic, cataracts don't matter there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, let's talk about another front-line crisis. There are currently 8,500 people waiting for an MRI in this province.

How many could've been helped if the government hadn't gutted the health care budget by \$50 million?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Eighteen months ago, the province had five MRIs. It currently has six, and by the end of this year it will have eight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: So, more machines. We are running those machines for longer hours. Indeed, one of the machines in town is currently running 24-7. And we are recruiting MRI techs. The wait-list is coming down. Is it down all the way yet, no. But it is coming down and we brought in a central triage for MRIs to make sure that the urgent ones are done wherever there's a slot, whenever there's a time to do it. And we're going to bring that wait-list down. We're making improvements. More machines, more hours, more staff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: And I might finish the minister's sentence: And 8,500 people waiting for an MRI in this province. That's the number you need to keep in mind, 8,500 people.

Speaker, let's try another. There are approximately 200 people on the cardiac wait-list. How many of them are still waiting for lifesaving care because of the Liberal's \$50-million cut to health care?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Cardiac surgery is a stress point. We are identifying more people numerically than we have in previous years because of the success of the cath lab, and I want to give a shout-out to them. They're doing an extremely good job and are very productive.

For those people who are not suitable for a stinting and the like, we have a cardiac surgery program which has expanded. We have a collaboration with the University of Ottawa and we are either bringing in surgeons or, occasionally, flying out patients, where appropriate.

This has worked. It is bringing down the wait-list, slowly, because of the numbers that are being added because of the success at the other end.

We're getting there; we're not there yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, the minister said there are no cuts; wound care is gone in Clarenville specifically because of the budget.

Now that we've learned that the Liberals have slashed \$50 million from health care, I ask the minister: Is that why there are over 1,000 – one hospital, at G.B. Cross – are on a wait-list for colonoscopies?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm delighted the Member brought this up. Just to correct a falsehood, there is wound care available in Clarenville hospital – there is, period.

Now then, with regard to the wait-list for colonoscopy, there has been a change in

the demand for procedures and the surgeons there are working with staff to reallocate time and resources to provide extra colonoscopy time. There is free time to be taken and there is no impediment to doing that. It is certainly non-financial. There have been no cuts; the budget is over by over \$200 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Surgeons, internal medicine specialists and nurses have all called me saying that there is no specialized wound care in Clarenville. The individual that was doing it does not have the ability to do it anymore.

I've talked to the surgeons in Clarenville and they tell me that the operating room is available, but they say that they're not doing colonoscopies, specifically because of budget cuts. They are told that they cannot have the money and they cannot do the procedures – period.

Will the minister reverse the \$50-million cut to health care so that the residents of Clarenville and surrounding area communities can get critical, preventative cancer screening?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There's obviously a communication problem with the surgeons in Clarenville. There have been no budget cuts to Clarenville hospital – none at all. The individual who is providing wound care is also doing the pre-admission clinic and there is capacity in both areas to deal with wound care.

So I would suggest the Member opposite gets his facts straight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality announced herself that breast cancer doesn't wait.

I ask the minister: When will women in Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of where they live, have equal access to this life-saving preventative screening?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Breast screening has been expanded, the program, in this province and it is now a self-referral process. You do not need to go through a physician or a primary care provider. There is a number you can ring to organize it yourself, essentially.

There are five, if I recall correctly, centres for breast cancer screening and there are new machines in at least three of those: Grand Falls-Windsor and I think the one on the West Coast and one in town here.

As an aside for the Members here, we have a good record in breast cancer treatment. We are second in Canada. With a bullet, we're going for first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We know that when it comes to cancer diagnosis, early detection and intervention is crucial. There are serious concerns about staffing to

support the breast screening program, with NLHS admitting they are working on a plan.

I ask the minister: Will she commit to a specific time and date when self-referred breast screening for women over 40 will be available in every region of the province? When exactly will women be able to book their appointments?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you.

We have invested significant effort in recruitment and retention. Between our department and Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, we have had considerable success. There are over 1,000 health care providers who are approved through the immigration program and, as I say, we have significant increases in staff because of our retention bonuses.

Breast screening is available in every region in the province. As we deal with the staffing shortages, it will become easier to book an appointment that's more convenient. It is available in every region in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Liberals announced an expansion of breast cancer screening program in May of 2024, yet the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor is still waiting for the new mammography machine. Now we learn it will take another four to five months, what we're being told, before it even arrives.

When, specially, will these new mammography units actually be ordered and arrive?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Unfortunately, we are at the mercy of supply chain. These machines are made in specific places. They're ordered –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: – and there are machines being installed across the province – three new ones that I am aware of. As far as the exact date, I don't have it. I'm happy to go back to NLHS and find it for him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

This week, I just spoke about a very close, personal friend of mine, a relative who waited 104 days, that's after she got diagnosed. If you don't get diagnosed, early detection is gone out the window and we're needlessly having people in this province die, and we don't need it anymore.

Speaker, a representative of NLHS confirmed that women aged 40 to 49 still cannot self-refer for breast cancer screening at the Grand Falls-Windsor site.

When will women in Grand Falls-Windsor finally be able to go online and book an appointment for a mammogram?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Obviously, there are some delays in getting the machine, as the Member opposite talks about – I have said I would look into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: I have said I would look into it. How many machines is he referring to in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I heard the question quite clear; I'd like to hear the response.

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

In terms of the specifics of the delay, I am not aware, nor have I been made aware by the Member opposite of this particular instance. I'm happy to look into it because by finding out where these things go wrong, we can make the situation better.

As to when the new machine will come to Grand Falls, I will find out for him.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll remind the minister it's Grand Falls-Windsor, Minister. A slight overlook, but we can't forget that.

It's one thing to book an appointment; it's another to actually have the appointment. When will these appointments finally take place? We have a lot of people in Grand

Falls-Windsor that are very concerned. They were made a promise that this Liberal government would deliver. It's not there yet. We have tariffs coming in. Who knows how long it's going to be. Can't wait to keep the House open for the next nine weeks to discuss this.

Minister, when are people going to be able to book an appointment? When?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I understand the Member repeating the question, and I will repeat the answer. I will find out for him. I do not know the supply chain issue that is causing the problem the Member alludes to. I will find out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, it's been nine years since the Liberals slashed the 24-hour emergency at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood. Despite repeated promises to reinstate it by the Liberal premiers, nothing has happened.

Speaker, is the real reason the \$50-million cut to the health care budget?

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

J. HAGGIE: There are no cuts to the health care budget. They are expected to provide some savings from amalgamation and consolidation. They are currently \$200 million over and their line of credit has just been extended. There are not cuts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Tell that to the people in Botwood, Minister.

Speaker, since the Liberals closed the 24-hour emergency room, residents must travel 30 minutes away to an already overwhelmed emergency room at Grand Falls-Windsor.

Speaker, why are the Liberals putting cuts above patient care?

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

J. HAGGIE: You called me rather than recognizing me standing, Speaker. Very good.

There are no cuts – there are no cuts. The savings are from consolidation of multiple backroom departments. There are no front-line cuts.

We have 1,133 more nurses than we did 18 months ago. We have over 140 physicians more than we did 18 months ago. There are no cuts. The NLHS is \$200 million overspent. Their line of credit has just been extended. There are no cuts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's been promised in the last election, I guess, that if a Liberal won, that would be reinstated but that didn't happen. So there's \$50 million gone somewhere.

Speaker, the residents of the Southern Avalon remain without a physician to care for an aging population,

Speaker, is the failure to provide a long-promised doctor in Trepassey because the Liberals have cut \$50 million from the health care budget?

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

J. HAGGIE: There are no cuts. They are overdrawn at the bank. We have corrected that and increased their overdraft limit. They are spent over budget by \$200 million.

There are no cuts. We have 140 more physicians in the province now than we did 18 months ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, you've got 20 seconds left.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There are no cuts – there are no cuts. And \$200 million overdrawn and an extended line of credit at the bank for actually all three, if not four of the zones. There are no cuts, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

International Women's Day is on Saturday. I have a single mother of three young children on income support facing nowhere to live. She currently pays \$1,450 in rent. Her social assistance doesn't cover it and she is forced to use her child tax credit to fill the gap to make ends meet. In June, her rent will increase by over another \$600 and now she's facing an increase in her electricity bill.

I ask the Minister of Finance, how, in these troubled times, she plans to help people like this single mother already pushed to the margins?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a privilege to be filling in for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and Housing. As MHA for Mount Scio, I receive a lot of questions, issues from people who are struggling with housing issues. I encourage anyone with an individual need or situation to reach out. As an MHA, I have multiple discussions with them on multiple government programs.

Usually, we can work together to find something with housing. We have rent supplements. If their income is under a certain threshold, we can get them on the wait-list. None of that is an immediate fix but, please, reach out to myself and we can work with the individual to see what options we have.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Reaching out only helps if it actually results in solutions.

The Minister of Finance touts a continued reduction of the gas tax as solution to affordability. This mother is receiving the maximum income support benefit, there is a long wait-list for NLHC housing and government lacks a political will to implement rent and vacancy controls.

I ask the minister what action she plans to take to ensure people are not rendered homeless as a result of inflationary and predatory rent increases?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

From a housing perspective, we have many initiatives in place where we're trying to increase supply. We need to increase supply of housing so that there's more housing available at every spectrum of the market.

We have our provincial HST rebate for 2024 for developers to develop more housing. We have a Rental Housing Development Loan Program. We are making land available for rental development. We have the First-Time Homebuyers Program to move people up which will create more capacity for the lower income housing, Speaker, and we have the Secondary and Basement Suite Incentive Program.

Looking in the totality, Speaker, that's not to say that it's not very challenging for individuals in the province, and I hear that as well, but I'd encourage anyone to reach out and if there are any suggestions, happy to discuss those further.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the housing crisis continues to impact people across this province. My district has a zero per cent vacancy. Housing starts are up across Canada, yet our province saw a decrease in housing starts. With tariffs, the building costs are going to rise.

What is this government doing to incentivize building new units across this province?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's very important that we do work with municipalities and the federal government to create more housing in all areas of the spectrum, low- and middle-income housing particularly, Speaker. I can say in Lab City, we're working with the federal government on a multi-unit housing project, I know the Member is aware of, and we welcome the federal government to step up on that sooner rather than later.

Like I said, we have five other initiatives. If anyone has any other suggestions, happy to discuss those. We have the provincial HST rate rebate in 2024 for developers. We have Rental Housing Development Loan Program. We're making government land available. We have the First-Time Homebuyers Program. We have Secondary and Basement Suite Incentive Program, Speaker. In my District of Mount Scio, there are big apartment buildings going up just by the new Aquarena, right in the heart of St. John's.

So we are doing things, Speaker, and I'd encourage anyone to reach out.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, clearly the five-point plan isn't working for Labrador West. People in my district have been evicted by landlords so they can ask higher prices of fly-in, fly-out workers. There are 30 applicants on NL Housing wait-list. There are supposed to be four new units, but that hasn't gone to tender yet. There is zero per cent vacancy and not a single new building on the

horizon. So Labradorians deserve safe and affordable housing.

Can the minister highlight somewhere in that five-point plan where Labradorians can actually find affordable housing?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is a tricky situation – for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, they are working with Lab City. They are working with the federal government. There is a multi-unit housing project that they are working on. We need the federal government to contribute. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will step up to that as well. We need the federal government to move quickly on that as well.

I don't believe the wait-list is as high as what the Member referenced. I believe there's under 20 on the wait-list. That's not to say that those individuals don't need housing. As the MHA for Mount Scio, I deal all the time with people on the wait-list, it's tricky, but the most immediate thing we can do is for the federal government to move forward with helping to fund this project.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to table the document I was referring to about the \$50 million cuts in health care that I spoke about today.

SPEAKER: Does the Member have leave to table the document?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I also want to table a document I read from during Question Period, regarding the eye clinic at the Janeway.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Does the Member also have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

B. PETTEN: Thanks.

SPEAKER: Any other tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 10, 2025.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow, notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business, and if not earlier adjourned the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 13, 2025.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition are:

WHEREAS individual residents and municipal leaders have spoken to the deplorable road conditions in the District of Harbour Main; and

WHEREAS the district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, North River and Makinsons, who have roads in desperate need of repair and paving. Specifically, Route 60 and 70; and

WHEREAS these roads see high volume flows everyday and drivers can expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed out areas along the way.

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 immediately take the necessary steps to repair and repave these important roadways to ensure the safety of the driving public who use them on a regular basis.

Speaker, I think this is my 16th time bringing forward petitions on the roads in the District of Harbour Main. And I've only been here – this is my fifth, going on sixth year. Since 2019 I have been presenting these petitions, as well as in debate, I've been raising these issues. I've raised them in Question Period.

What I'm specifically focusing on today is Route 60, from the roundabout in Holyrood out to part of Kelligrews, out to the Upper Gullies, Kelligrews area. Speaker, there's no question, it's probably the worst road in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I would venture to say that.

What we need to understand here, and we've been hearing from Opposition MHAs all week about the despicable road conditions in their districts, and what I'm hearing is what system is in play here by the government to determine which roads take priority, because in my mind, there's no impartial, objective system that is in play. I would argue that what it is, it's playing politics with pavement. We need a fair, impartial objective system, and what would that system focus on? It would focus on the fact that the roads that are the worst need to be done first. Is that a complicated concept?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Let's do this, people. We have a responsibility. This is very important throughout the province, but

I'm talking right now about the area of Holyrood, out to part of Kelligrews. It's unacceptable. There are millions of dollars invested here. Let's get politics out of pavement, once and for all. Let's deal with the roads that are the worst and do them first.

We cannot have this system continue. This arbitrary system that this government has been in play for the last number of years, it's just not good enough.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The District of Exploits has seen increased speeding and ATV activity in the area, causing safety issues for residents in their community. Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly to increase enforcement in the district to provide adequate safety and protection to our residents.

Speaker, I've brought this petition to the floor many, many times, and I'll do it again and I'll keep doing it because I keep hearing the same issues in my district. Policing in the district, of course, is lacking, and we need more enforcement to be in the district for such activities as speeding, safety issues, crime is another one.

Now the police do the job that they do really well, with the resources they have, and they do it adequately and efficiently. But the timing is there. By the time the police get to somewhere, there's somebody making a call on those issues. It's time related, they may not even get to the call and people feel that their safety is being abandoned by this.

Back in 2019 there was a review done for resources in the Exploits District and there was supposed to be another two additional officers placed in the Grand Falls-Windsor

District which are still lacking today, and people are still having that problem.

The minister ignored the problem in 2019. There was another review done after that; still ignored the problem and we're still lacking in officers.

We ask the minister to please pay attention and have those officers instated.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for raising a valid concern. Any time we have vacancies within the RNC or the RCMP, regardless of which community we're talking about, we're focused, as a government, to try to fill those vacancies. We've done a significant amount of recruitment. I know the RCMP is a contracted police force. They've seen a problem with recruitment in the past that has been rectified. They've made some changes in their recruitment process and that has put some 220 people through the system, starting in that process through the interview process, try the selection process.

So we're going to start to see a significant amount of those recruits coming out into the place within the province, into jurisdictions like the Member opposite has talked about. We're going to continue to focus on that; we've made investments. There are an additional 19 officers that we announced for this budget coming – so I hope the hon. Member will vote for it – that will be coming forward.

The Policing Transformation Working Group will be looking and working with communities, not unlike he's mentioned here today, and we're going to continue to try to fill all the vacancies we possibly can. I put my support behind the RCMP for what they're trying to do and recruit those valid officers that we need to fill those positions in

the communities to make sure all of our communities are safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Speaker, this is a petition to call to amend the Residential Tenancies Act to include rental increase limitations.

A lack of supply of rental units, coupled with increase demand has resulted in profiteering by some landlords, simply because the market allows. The *Residential Tenancies Act, 2018* allows for annual rent increases by any amount for any reason. In doing so, the current legislation lends itself to predatory rental increases for the purpose of profit and treats housing as a commodity rather than a fundamental human right.

Significant rental increases are making life more unaffordable for many in our communities, especially seniors and those on income support and fixed incomes. The private sector has failed to deliver on the promise of affordable homes.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce legislation to limit the amount of rent that can be charged annually.

Speaker, on more than one occasion, the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills has disputed the assertion that rents were being increased exorbitantly, and this goes back several years. They're more than just 2, 3 or 4 per cent or whatever else. They're significant, and I've made the minister aware of this long before now.

I know that it said that recent caps and vacancy controls will discourage investment in affordable housing. Well, I would argue that what we've seen here are REITs, these real estate income trusts and other large,

financialized landlords buying up, in many cases, older properties and failing to invest any real money in them. All we have to do is think of Keane Place and then jacking the rents up. If that's the type of investment we're talking about in affordable housing, we don't need that type of investment. We need some controls on these predators.

I already brought up one example today of a mother facing over a \$600 rent increase. There's no way she can afford it, no matter what government says, because she's maxed out and has been told that the best thing she can do is go couch surfing and then maybe the government can deem her homeless and put her up further on the list. That's not acceptable.

I will say this, until we have more affordable and I would say non-market, community-based housing, such as either through the NLHC or through organizations like the Co-operative Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, we've got to find some way to make sure people are not facing eviction, that they're stable, and rent control and vacancy control are two ways.

Thank you.

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 leaders to ensure our Northern Labrador residents are provided with access to timely and adequate health care.

Frequently patients are prevented from getting to medical appointments at outside provincial health centres. Some of the delays are due to inclement weather, yes, but often patients are prevented from getting on the medical flights to their appointments because there's no seat left on the flight.

There are multiple reasons for this and we are calling on the government to work towards removing these barriers so patients can access their medical appointments for diagnosis and treatment.

Speaker, I've presented this petition before. Last summer, we were promised more flights, extra seats for patients to get out to their appointments, which I relayed to my constituents. That built hope and that was actually a very positive thing, but that was very short lived. What we started to see that day, in actual fact, there was less seats and less flights.

This petition is about access, and I underlined the "words access to timely and adequate health care," because one of my fellow peers over here on this side of the House said, if you don't have your health, you have nothing – if you don't have your health, you have nothing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: As the MHA for Torngat Mountains, I sadly say that too many of my constituents, who are my friends and family, have passed away.

It was just recently we had a lady go out to the hospital and she passed away. I talked to her brother on the road in Nain, because he escorted her out, and he stopped me and we were talking and he said, Lela, when I went out with her, I thought this was going to be just a regular hospital visit. But, he said, I didn't expect her to pass away. Three days after she was diagnosed with cancer, she died – three days.

So, really, when we look at that, that's a huge failing. I've stood in this House of Assembly and talked about my sister-in-law who was misdiagnosed for almost two years and when she was finally diagnosed with cancer, she died within six months.

Speaker, at the end of the day, we know across this province health care is in

disarray. We know there are long wait-lists for appointments. We know when you go to emerge there are long waits but, in Northern Labrador, we've been suffering long before this with trying to access health care.

What I'm asking for is to live up to your promise to increase the flights so our patients can get out and, more importantly too, have confidence that they will get home.

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time is up.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS the residents from Cape Broyle to St. Shott's are lacking a full-time family doctor; and

WHEREAS eastern health is failing to accommodate a physician who is willing to practise full-time in the area; and

WHEREAS the Trepassey region is the farthest away from our primary care hospital on the Island portion of the province; and

WHEREAS the Trepassey region has only one ambulance and the Cape Broyle ambulance service has a major staffing concern. The region can be under red alert for multiple hours at a time.

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately address the doctor shortage in our province by accommodating those who wish to practise here and to immediately address the physician shortage in Trepassey and Ferryland area by

accommodating physicians to practise in the area.

Speaker, I've done this petition many times as well. I'm certainly not going to count how many times I've done it, but I've done it many times. The minister today who was answering the health questions, he was the one who started this mess two or three years ago when he took the doctor that was in Trepassey, wanted to go and stay there, but they wouldn't pay her to stay there. They wanted her to go there on a fee for service instead of giving her a salary. That was the first start. That was two years ago.

We have nurse practitioners who take care of the area now. No doubt about it, they do a great job. But there are people in the Trepassey area and in the Ferryland area that drive to Holyrood to see the same doctor that was in Trepassey and Ferryland area for four days a week. So they leave their area and don't want to give up their doctor – yes, they can see a nurse practitioner, but if they go see their nurse practitioner in their area in Trepassey, that means they're not going to be a patient of their doctor in Holyrood.

They can't have both, and that's the way it works in our district. They can't have two people, and I understand that. But they should, in priority, be bringing a doctor back to the Trepassey area to service Trepassey down to Cape Broyle, or from St. Shott's down to Cape Broyle, to put a doctor back in the area for two days in Trepassey area and two days down in the Ferryland area. But that's not there any more.

When did it become acceptable in this province to say that you wait two to three weeks for an appointment for a doctor? When did it become acceptable? At one time, you had a blood clinic down on Major's Path that you could walk into a blood clinic and get your blood work done. That is gone since this government came in. It's been vanished, and they blame it on COVID. It happened during COVID. There's no reason

they shouldn't reinstate it. It's the same everywhere, you've got to book an appointment.

So when did we become acceptable to two and three weeks to wait for a doctor's appointment? It doesn't seem fair. What caused this problem all of a sudden since COVID? Can somebody tell us over there what caused the problem? Why did they shut down their blood clinic on Major's Path for people to go out? Now you've got to pay. People go in, in some of the clinics, to go pay \$25 to get blood work done to send out.

That's not acceptable. It's not acceptable. But people will pay it because they want to get their blood work done rather than walk into a clinic and get it done. I remember going out there myself five or 10 years ago and being able to go in, take a number, you sit there for a half an hour, and you have your blood work done.

Anyway, Speaker, thank you for speaking to this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

The reason for this petition:

We have concerns that the entire family law system in Newfoundland and Labrador, the system will work best when the parties involved are prepared to agree and cooperate going forward, but for the large number of adults and children involved, the process is troubling, costly, emotionally turbulent and non-effective.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to review the legislation related to family and civil law and find ways to make the system work for

residents, families and children of our province.

Each one of us, as MHAs in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, received an email from a gentleman in Wabush. He sent it to 40 of us here in the House of Assembly because he has experienced the system. I give credit to the Member for Lake Melville, who's the only one, apparently, according to him on a post, that responded at that time.

There's another gentleman who went public and relayed it to all of us, to the fact that – in Portugal Cove - St. Phillips – of his frustration with the system. I can tell you now in the District of Bonavista we have one, one that has paid over \$10,000, who's been granted access by the court but there's no enforcement mechanism.

Finally, another one from the District of Bonavista and I just want to give you a little chronology of this particular event, without mentioning any names or particular case. This young dad was estranged from his child in October of 2023. He went to seek legal aid. For three or four months, he tried until he connected with legal aid. It was until October of 2024, when really he got a court date, being estranged from his young son for that long.

I attended that court with him, only to find that the lawyer that was assigned to him didn't show up in court and it was postponed until later. I wanted to attend the next one, which I did, but not permitted in the court. This time there seemed to be a little bit of movement. That was on February 28 in here, October 2023 to February of 2025.

We have 5,000 children in child support. Nearly 10 per cent of our population going to be going through or involved in our K-to-12 system and we wonder sometimes what the implications are. We need legislation brought to review both family and civil law.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

A. PARSONS: I'm going to respond on this one, not perhaps in my current role, but as someone who has done the role of the Minister of Justice, someone who has actually practiced family law and someone who appreciates the issue that the Member raises.

The fact is there are challenges within the system, there's absolutely no doubt. But just a few points I toss the Member's way because there's one thing to bring a petition, but I do have to ask about some of the points there because there's a little bit of a lack of clarity amongst some of the things that he said there.

The first being when we say review the rules. We have to ask which rules are the petitioners talking about. Is the *Rules of the Supreme Court, 1986*? Is it the *Family Law Act*? Is it the *Children's Law Act*? Is it the *Divorce Act* of Canada? We need to find that out; we have different rules there.

The next part about the child support. I don't know if you mean children in care or children that are under a child support order in terms of one party paying the other. What I will say is Newfoundland and Labrador actually has the best child support system in Canada, statistically proven every year. We have the best one. What that means is they are very successful, in most cases, of ensuring that the payer is paying the payee and the pay is receiving.

Now, you find me any system that is perfect; it's not there, but we are doing well there. What I would say is that the system, in many cases, it's not just on the rules that are there. In many cases we're dealing with legal counsel, obviously. We're dealing with parties, some of whom are difficult. We're also dealing with – one thing I will point out

and this is where nobody in the Legislature can make this decision. We're dealing with the judiciary, who have autonomy and have independence and, in many cases, they are making these decisions. So you can make the rules however you want but we always have to watch out for that pendulum of going from one side to the other and do we go too far.

So what I would say there, to the Member opposite, is I agree, going into Family Court is extremely expensive and we've all had constituents go through that. It is extremely expensive and why I always caution people. It is always better to work together to find that solution before you enter into a court of law. But what I would say is if we can get down to – I don't think there's any Minister of Justice that would never consider possible solutions to the legislation but keep in mind, always keep in mind the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well, and talking to their membership. Again, we all want the same thing here; we want a court system that provides some certainty but just changing the rules sometimes depending on what that rule change that is requested is not always the solution to the problem listed by your constituent.

Thank you.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, social work students completing a Bachelor of Social Work at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador undertake, no less, than 700 hours of unpaid practicum 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 and to support dependents.

There is inadequate funding for preceptorships and independent placements, and it fails to recognize the significant time and effort invested by social work students during these critical experiences. Social work students engaged in practicum placements, internships and full-time studies find it challenging to maintain part-time employment, thus impeding their ability to cover their educational and living expenses. The lack of sustainable funding for community not-for-profit work placements adversely affects social work students' employment opportunities, hindering their professional growth and development.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allocate a sustainable amount of funding to support community not-for-profit workplaces that provide placements for social work students. This funding could be aimed at ensuring that these workplaces can afford to offer fair compensation to social work students during their field practicum. This compensation should align with at least the compensation provided at a minimum wage and remove the fees associated with the practicum for local and international students as well.

We all know the importance of our professional health care workers, and we all know what our social workers deal with on a daily basis. And we have some wonderful social workers in the province who work, and they are overworked. We want to train them and keep them here.

So if students are able to go to different locations around the province, around our wonderful province, and do their internships and do it without the strain of wondering if they're going to put something on the table that day or afford their rent, at least by following this and having them somewhat have paid work terms, paid internships would help them there. And if they're in a community and they're not worried about

their financial burden they start to enjoy where they are. And there's a better probability that those students will stay in these communities and provide the services that we so badly need in and around the province.

So I do ask for government to look at this as serious and as soon as possible.

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, Order 10, second reading of Bill 90, An Act to Amend the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland and Labrador Act, and that is seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I would move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that we do second reading on Bill 90, An Act to Amend the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland and Labrador Act.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 90 now be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland and Labrador Act." (Bill 90)

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Just for the knowledge of, especially, those on the other side and those who are watching, today, we're bringing in this act, we're finally moving the second reading but we will only be doing my reading as to this and, in fact, I think we'll continue this on at another juncture.

But it was a good chance for me to speak to this to sort of lay out the landscape of, especially, what we've dealt with over the last number of months and even years on this very important piece of legislation. I have bunch of information laid out in front of me here and what I'll do is I'll try to flick back and forth because there's a lot that's gone on here. I'll point out that this is a necessary piece of mirror legislation to federal legislation that has already been passed in Ottawa. In fact, it has gone through numerous committees, both MPs on the Resource Committee as well as the Senate.

I participated in numerous calls with those committees on that, publicly, and it has also been passed in the legislature in Nova Scotia. They have the same act which was passed before Christmas. The whole purpose being to amend the Accord to allow for offshore renewable development and, in our case, it's important because we already have offshore hydrocarbon development and we have offshore oil, which we all know the importance of and, in this case, we also have the potential for offshore renewables that will coexist with this.

Nova Scotia does not have offshore oil developments as it stands, but they have a regulator and they're a part of this jointly regulated industry. They are also moving towards offshore renewable operations and their legislation has been in place, so this is a little bit of catch-up here which is why I'm hoping that at some point in the next week

we will be able to get this legislation debated and passed so we can continue to move forward for the benefit of our citizens.

I'm certainly not going to do speaking notes but just a few points here to make sure everybody knows where we are. So this one is Bill 90, but it is the mirror to Bill C-49. To anybody that wanted to review what was done in Ottawa, it was the C-49 debate. I spoke to the House of Commons and the Senate committees on those and outlined our support for the amendments.

In many cases, I had contact with MPs of both Conservative and Liberal, spoke to senators both Conservative or whatever the Liberal senators are called now and made sure that they understood that we worked on this bill in conjunction with the federal government to make sure that our interests were represented, to make sure that we got what we needed and, in this case, because it is mirror legislation, it is hard to change what we have here without presenting a change that needs to be done in Ottawa.

To anybody that might be watching though, I will say, it is interesting the Tim Houston government in Nova Scotia has passed their share of this legislation and has already moved forward.

As everybody knows, we are committed to renewable energy projects and that is both onshore, which we've been moving forward for some years, as well as offshore. During the course of this debate, especially in the Committee section, I'm happy to answer any questions that might arise on the current status of our offshore, current status of our onshore, in little ways, as long as it doesn't diverge from the point of this legislation. But again, we all talk about decarbonization, we all talk about our economy and how it's essential, these two are linked as we all know.

I'll make a point clear, just to ensure – because this was a comment that came up on numerous occasions. I had some

Conservative MPs – not the ones from Newfoundland; there's on particular MP from Nova Scotia Conservative, who – anyway, I'm going to be nice. Mom said if you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything, so I'm not going to say anything.

But it was clear that there was an absolute lack of knowledge of what we are doing in Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, I found the committee stage far less valuable than I've seen – again, I'm not pointing a finger at Conservatives because some of the Liberal Members as well. It was a very partisan-oriented exercise. I haven't done many of them. At the end of the day, I don't know if they listened to what Newfoundland and Labrador wanted or not, but again I could only make our points clear that we wanted to get something done for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I found the Senate committee interesting but also positive and had contact with a number of our senators. In fact, one of the prime senators on this was Senator David Wells, someone who I had a good relationship with. I think he does a good job representing Newfoundland and Labrador. So just to ensure that nobody thinks that this is partisan exercise, because a lot of times we get lost in that that this is a partisan exercise, it's not. It's about allowing for further development of our offshore.

But one of those questions, and I come back to it, was, what's the impact going to be on our offshore oil industry? Now, I'll make clear and I think we've established it is not just in word but, indeed, we are 100 per cent supportive of our offshore oil industry, full stop, there are no questions to be asked on that.

We have proven that from the day that the current Premier, Premier Furey came in – sorry, I am not supposed to say the name. So they came in and I was a new minister as well and there were questions to be asked, where are we on this? Where are we

on the future of our offshore? Where are we on renewables? We had a rally out there on the front steps and we made clear there, under the direction of the Premier, and then by our Cabinet and caucus that we are 100 per cent there and, in fact, we secured about a \$320-million investment from Ottawa that we then invested in our offshore.

Again, I don't just say that; it's not just me. You only have to talk to Energy NL. You only have to talk to CAPP. You only have to talk to the companies and they will tell you that this government is supportive of our offshore oil. So there was no way that we were going to do anything to alter the Accord in such a way that would have any possibility of a negative impact on our offshore industry – full stop, again.

That was one of the conversations going on, earlier, and I certainly don't fault the questioners from asking that question but, again, I think there have been some changes made on the federal level which we have also mirrored and I think we've satisfied those.

Now, the reality is that we do have an offshore that, while we continue to invest in the hydrocarbon sector, we also know there's a massive potential for renewables. We know there's a massive potential for turbines to be used for electrification as it relates to our offshore platforms, you name it.

Again, people don't realize we're many years behind many other places in the world when it comes to wind energy, when it comes to electrification using wind. You only have to look to Europe; look to the UK. They are decades ahead of us when it comes to that. There's still a way to go before we move into that on our offshore.

The reason we did onshore as opposed to offshore was, number one, economic feasibility. That's the main reason we went onshore, but the next part of this is that

there will be an opportunity for investment in our offshore renewables. With that, we have a chance to combat climate change. We have a chance to decarbonize and, most importantly in many ways, we have a chance to create jobs. We have a chance to generate income for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, back to the amendment. So these proposed legislative amendments, they're significant because without this, we do not move forward when it comes to offshore development. We don't move forward. These proposed amendments will ensure that the necessary measures are in place to support offshore renewable energy opportunities, allows for the fiscal regime that allows the maximum economic return to the province.

More of a housekeeping one here, renames the C-NLOPB as the C-NLOEB – the offshore energy board. It expands the mandate to become the lead regulatory body, not just for offshore energy as it relates to oil, but also for renewables. Offshore energy, as a whole, will remain under the board who again, I think, are doing an excellent job.

Further is the joint management of the offshore area and, as a regulator, they've built up decades of expertise in every facet of offshore energy. Again, we need them to continue. We didn't feel the need for a separate regulator. In my opinion, that would create a duplication of cost and overlap of people providing different services and I don't think there was a need to do that.

It allows for a new opportunity for a new industry for Newfoundland and Labrador, but make sure that we strike the balance with other pre-existing industries. I say, first and foremost, our fishery. I've had multiple conversations with the FFAW on this and recently just have reached out to our new president, Dwan Street, and have had conversations, actually as late as, I think,

January or might have been Christmas. We actually had a conversation since Ms. Street has been in this role.

I will say again that this was not a case of Ottawa dictating to Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. This was a case of a tri-lateral Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ottawa working together for legislation that fit both provinces and also recognized the nuance that exists for both provinces.

We need to pass this in order to fully implement, to revise regulatory regime. Nova Scotia's came in force in January. There are two areas of amendments. Those related to the development and the regulation of our offshore energy. There is also a chance while we're dealing with amendments to the Accord, to modernize provisions for our offshore oil.

Specifically, and I will get very specific now, the amendments will change the long and short titles of the act to reflect the inclusion of offshore renewable energy. Changes the name, as I already mentioned. It will establish a land tenure regime for offshore renewable energy projects. It establishes a ministerial decision-making process respecting the issuance of submerged land licences and activities of the regulator. It expands the application of the safety and environmental protection regime and its enforceable powers, as well as the occupational health and safety regime to offshore renewable energy projects.

It provides the LGIC with the authority to make regulations prohibiting the commencement or continuation of petroleum resource or renewable energy activities in marine conservation areas. It authorizes the negotiation for the surrender of an interest, cancellation of an interest if negotiations fail and compensation to the owner for the surrender of cancelling an interest.

It establishes a regulatory and liability regime for abandoned facilities for oil and gas or renewable energy projects. It allows the federal or provincial government to unilaterally fund certain expenses incurred by the regulator as a result of specific requests made by that government. One of those points is that anything with the federal government is obviously of a bilingual nature. So if the federal government wanted a bilingual application of this, that would be their cost, not Newfoundland and Labrador, which we're certainly fine with.

It limits the duration of significant discovery licences to 25 years. I will point out that that specific one actually came from industry itself. It provides the LGIC with the authority to make regulations to regulate access to offshore infrastructure, including to enforce tolls and tariffs. It enables a new transboundary hydrocarbon management regime to enable the implementation of the Canada-France transboundary fields agreement.

It removes references to the former *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*, and clarifies the role of ministers and the regulator with respect to the conduct of impact assessments of designated projects, as well as regional and strategic assessments under the *Impact Assessment Act*, and specifies that the regulator may consult with Indigenous peoples on behalf of the Crown to identify and accommodate adverse impacts to Aboriginal or treaty rights.

It also has a number of housekeeping amendments such as changing numbers to words, updating statutory references, incorporating gender-neutral language. A few, though, that I feel the need to highlight, so it amends the definition of offshore areas specifically to include renewable energy. As it stands, we have an MOU with the federal government which defines the offshore area for renewables and recognizes our exclusive jurisdiction of waters lying between the jaws of the land and certain

coastal waters. This will ensure that the province will regulate any renewable energy developments in our inshore area.

This is a big one: It expands benefits principles to offshore renewable energy projects. Project proponents will be required to have a benefit plan and provide full and fair opportunity to Newfoundland and Labrador residents for contracting and employment opportunities.

Revenue sharing provisions will now include offshore renewable energy projects, and amendments to the federal Accord places the administration of royalties and other fiscal issues for offshore renewable energy fully under the control of the province, just as it is with oil and gas. It's implemented through the federal act, not necessary to mirror the same provision here, but let there be no doubt, it doesn't change what we have and I think what we have has been working pretty good.

As the federal legislation was being advanced, there were a few issues that arose. So this is where there was a lot of talk, a lot of conversation as part of the hearings as well. One of the activities was the prohibiting activity or canceling of an interest. The legislation allows for the making of regulations to prohibit or cancel an activity in an area identified as a conservation area. This requires the approval – and I'm very clear here – of both the federal and provincial minister. This ensures that no minister can unilaterally make the decision without the agreement of the other. This was an issue when the federal bill was being debated. There was a misunderstanding that the federal minister could unilaterally cancel an offshore petroleum interest.

That was one of the big things in the reading and I think this comes down to people having a concern about sometimes the federal minister responsible for environment and that individual's ideology and about whether that federal minister or

any federal minister thereafter could come in and just, boom, shut down our oil industry. So I can say it's very clear in the legislation, it is not on.

Just to anybody that might be of interest, this has passed readings in the Senate, in the feds, in Nova Scotia. Look, I can't say for a second I would ever consider signing off something that let anyone in Ottawa make a unilateral decision about our offshore oil; it's not on. That is reflected in the reading. Hopefully that gives some comfort for an issue that was generating some discussion and lead to conversations with, like I said, senator, federal MPs.

This is designed to mitigate regulatory and legal uncertainty by making clear that the authority to prohibit petroleum activities within the offshore area rests within the Accord. It's not subject to another piece of federal legislation. So there's no loophole. There's no backdoor here to get. The Accord covers it and the Accord makes it clear that Newfoundland and Labrador will always have that say or that veto, full stop again.

Now, the next one that generated some concern, some discussion, was fisheries concerns. Language was added to address fisheries concerns raised during the passage of the federal bill, which ensures that consideration will be given to the effects of offshore renewable energy projects on fishing activities.

Again, those responsible for the fishery in this province, they would have that concern. They would absolutely have a concern about how new offshore development might impact current fishing grounds, and we understood that all along. It was always a goal to make sure that there was consideration and consultation and protection. Again, I will point out that the fishery has long existed in this province, far before either an offshore oil industry started or an offshore renewable industry started.

At no point do I think we've ever had a conversation that we are going to enable a new industry at the harm of an existing industry.

The other thing I would point out, and again, I am far from a scientist on this matter, but I would submit that if you are able to have offshore oilrigs and everything that you have coming along with that in terms of vessels, in terms of drilling, in terms of exploration that you can also accommodate without significant risk to offshore fisheries you can also enable an offshore renewable industry. That doesn't mean you do it without talking to them, that means you do it exactly by talking to them to make sure that there is benefit to everybody.

So again, I point out specifically, because I know there are Members on the other side, they obviously have concerns on the fishery, as do we, but that's one that was specifically put in there. Again, in our multiple, multiple conversations with the FFAW, including with a new president, we have discussed this. In fact, I am not aware that that is currently a concern; I think the new language added alleviated the concerns that they might've had.

We're in the process, actually, of developing a fisheries advisory committee to provide the FFAW with a formal mechanism to share their feedback and work, not just with the province, but also to work with the board to work with the regulator to ensure that possible impacts would be identified and then mitigated.

So again, we think this is a massive, massive step forward. Any time we talk about our Accord it is a big day in this province because of the fight that was had. I think it would be a good time for me to mention that one of the architects of that accord was a gentleman by the name of the hon. A. Brian Peckford.

And just, it's funny, I will say this, it was interesting, because back when I was on

the Opposition side, just so we know it's not a partisan thing, I was on the Opposition side and this was when we were having the debate over Muskrat Falls, I think it was. I'll never forget that Mr. Peckford, who I have a lot of respect for and in fact, I was one of three MHAs that attended his book signing over a decade ago. I got a lot of time for anybody who's ever done the job, and I had a lot of time for him. As I've said before, the first time I campaigned, when I'm knocking on doors in 2011, and people are still saying: "they sold the shop." When they're still quoting you from the early '80s, you know it stuck with people.

Anyways, Mr. Peckford had criticized the sitting Premier for Muskrat Falls and the sitting premier, at the time, that said that former premiers should go on and we're not going to rule by missiles from afar. Basically, saying thanks but no thanks.

Now what I would say is I'm not going to certainly go that same route. I think that anybody in this province who is from here, lives here, addressed here, whatever, anybody's free to put their concerns out there and certainly the former premier.

In this case we chose not to agree. And I do have a letter here that was sent by the current Premier to the former premier, because the former premier did take the time back in September to make his concerns known and in fact it's an email that was sent to all the MPs and sent to, I think, most of the Newfoundland and Labrador senators. I think, the letter is widely spread so I don't need to read through the letter for the sake of this House, but the Premier did write back.

One of the big concerns was what that impact would be on our federal offshore as it relates to oil. Again, I think, this letter is widely available and if not, I can certainly make sure that it is because it should be. It's fairly short: Under no circumstance does this legislation provide a federal minister the authority to unilaterally cancel or revoke an

interest or to make regulations that would prohibit activities or the issuance of an interest in a marine conservation area. In fact, it ensures that the approval of both federal and provincial ministers is required through a joint order. The bill we negotiated and agreed to and now passed by Parliament makes clear that the authority to prohibit petroleum and or offshore renewable energy activities in the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area for the purposes of marine conservation rests within the Accord, and more specifically, with the Minister of Natural Resources Canada and the Minister for Industry, Energy and Technology. Cancellation of an interest can only occur through a joint order to cancel.

Again, I keep saying the same thing here. If one minister is not in agreement, the interest cannot be cancelled. I would also note that section 56.1, which referred to is subject to section 7 which says that no proposed regulation can be made without the provincial minister's approval.

To those that may think that by passing this act, that we are either deliberately or unintentionally harming our current offshore, I think, we have proven here now and it's proven actually – it doesn't matter what I say, it doesn't matter what the Premier says, it matters what the bill says, what the law says and what this House says and it is right here in this, which is fairly comprehensive and I hope everybody has had a chance to read it if they choose, but –

AN HON. MEMBER: I just received it.

A. PARSONS: Just received it, okay. You're a speed reader, you'll have it done by the end of – by the time I sit down.

Here's what I would say, I think it's important: It is fair to ask that question. It was right for the former premier to ask that question. It would be right for an Opposition Member to ask that question. It would be right for a Member of government to ask

that question. It's a good question, it's an important one.

It's what the Accord was built on, it was fought for and it has benefited Newfoundlanders and Labradorians but in no way, shape or form, does this amendment allow for any degradation of that protection that was fought for and will remain in law. Hopefully, we don't get too far into that line. I'm happy to answer the question, but I specifically made this point multiple times because that was one of the main bones of contention as we dealt with this over the last year or more.

Now, I have a copy of a letter, same thing here. This is another one that I wrote to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, the hon. Senator Paul Massicotte, and same thing, the removal of clause 28. This letter is widely available, and it is the same thing. Senator Wells had concerns – fair ball. Of course he has concerns, Senator Wells has a background in the offshore oil industry. It's one of the reasons, I think, that he was put in the Senate, because of that extensive knowledge; and maybe for his fundraising abilities, I don't know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

A. PARSONS: But what I would say – and I say that with all respect.

But it's the same thing. He had the concerns. He asked the questions, and I think we have that protection here. Now, I notice I have gone on for, actually, five minutes longer than I intended –

AN HON. MEMBER: Keep going, keep going.

A. PARSONS: No, I'm not doing that to anybody today. It's Thursday.

What I would say is this: The debate will probably conclude today with me sitting down. I wanted the chance to put this out

there so that Members on the other side can certainly take the *Hansard* and review what I've had to say.

If there are questions before now and when we debate this again, I am happy to do that; more importantly, not just for me to answer, but for people in the department to answer it because that's why they exist. They have a skill set and a knowledge and they are good public servants. Anything we can do to add to a founded debate here. The last thing any of us wants with an Accord, no matter who you are and what side you sit, it's the degradation of the Accord in any way, shape or form. None of us want that.

This, to me, is a furthering of the Accord to allow for a new industry for Newfoundland and Labrador; one that has not started yet but allows potential and is being aggressively sought in Nova Scotia. So on that note, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'll get to speak again at closing next week. I'll get to speak to Committee.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Good job to my colleague there.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, to adjourn debate on Bill 90.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, and I move that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 105, Interim Supply.

SPEAKER: Did you have a seconder for that, sorry?

L. DEMPSTER: That would be seconded by the Member for Terra Nova.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider 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 (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

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

Resolution

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

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

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I said there the other day, I have a number of things that I could bring up and tariffs being one of them, of course. But there are a couple of other issues I do want to raise.

The first thing I just want to bring up, and I don't know how other Members, if it happened to them or not, but summer student grants are coming out. I saw the announcement. In the past, whether it was a PC administration or a Liberal administration, as long as I've been here, the way that summer grants always worked, there would be an amount of money that would be budgeted for grants.

They would basically take that amount of money. It would be divided by 40, generally speaking. As an MHA, I would receive a spreadsheet saying these are the groups that applied for summer grants in your district, whether they be sports groups and so on, here's your share of the money, so to speak. You let us know who you think we should give the money to, the grants and so on. The way it was always done.

I will say that in my district – because we ran into situations in Mount Pearl, where you have Mount Pearl North, Mount Pearl - Southlands. In that case what you had happening, you can have a situation, for example, where when the group that applied for the grant, the mailing address

that was on it could have been weighted, say, towards Mount Pearl - Southlands. So therefore when I get my spreadsheet, I would have all these people looking for grants and a pot of money, whereas my colleague in Mount Pearl North might only have two or three people looking for grants and more money than she needed, so to speak.

What we always did, whether it was former Member, Steve Kent, who was there, we would sit down together. We'd take our two of our allocations, put them together, put all the groups in Mount Pearl together because it was all kids from both our districts anyway and we would divvy it out. When Jim Lester was there, I would do the same with him. When my former colleague, the now Member for Mount Pearl North, when she first got elected, we did the very same, to be fair and square and even to all the groups in our community.

Well, last year, grants would come out and I was looking and said, what's going on? I haven't received the spreadsheet. I haven't received anything. What's going on? Eventually, I said, what the heck is going on here? So next thing I find out, I go over to our Mount Pearl Seniors Independence to say, Paul, what's on the go? We applied for a summer student. We've gotten one for years. I said: Yes, I know. You've always gotten them. I said: We allocated you one. We got a letter saying we were turned down. I said: Turned down? I said: I never even got a spreadsheet yet to even recommend you for one. What's going on?

Well, what I found out, apparently, is that the Minister of Fisheries and agriculture, or whatever the heck he's called there now, who was responsible for the grants, from what I can gather – I'd love for him to explain to this House of Assembly – is that he decided to take all the grant money and instead of allocating it to the district and the MHAs, he decided who was getting the grants.

Like, I'll take Mount Pearl Soccer. Traditionally, Mount Pearl Soccer would probably apply for five or six summer students and I would be able to allocate maybe three or four. Mount Pearl Baseball would do the same and they'd probably get two or three. Mount Pearl Track and Field would probably get a couple. The Church of the Ascension would get one. The Church of the Good Shepherd would get one. Our Lady, Queen of Families would get one. Mount Pearl Seniors Independence would get one. And myself and the Member for Mount Pearl North, we would sort of, like I say, put it together and allocate it.

Last year, I got nothing. So apparently the minister decided that he was going to take my allocation – now, I don't know if he did it for over there, I don't know. But apparently he took my allocation and I think he might've taken other allocations and he decided who was getting the grants.

Last year, Mount Pearl Soccer got nothing. They got one, but I think that that was the post-secondary, which we never allocated those. Post-secondary was always done by the department, but summer students, high school, district – I never got anything. Mount Pearl Soccer got nothing. Mount Pearl Baseball got nothing. And finally we found out the Mount Pearl Seniors did get one after. Do you know why? Because my colleague went to the Premier, that's why. And I'm glad she did. I support her. I was going to go to the Premier, but Mount Pearl Seniors got one after a call to the Premier's office. But there was no allocation.

So now that grants are out again –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Okay, the Member's giving me the thumbs up, that's good. And I'm not blaming this – there's a new minister here now.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Good, good, good. Well, I'm glad to see that the minister now filling that position is giving me two thumbs up, so I guess we're going to do it right again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Thank you – thank you.

But what happened last year was absolutely disgraceful, I would say. It was absolutely disgraceful, and it wasn't on you. We know who did it. We know who the minister was. But that was absolutely unacceptable.

So if it's fixed this year, perfect. Last year was disastrous. It was not fair. It was partisan. I don't know what other descriptions I could put on it. But it was absolutely unacceptable.

Thank you to Minister Stoodley, you're a good person, appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: But I still haven't received my spreadsheet yet. I guess I'm going to get one, that's good. Thank you.

The other one I want to bring up – I only got a couple of minutes here now – student assistants. I talked yesterday about home care and the importance of our vulnerable and our elderly and home care. Well, another group that we need to care for, of course, and would fall amongst that vulnerable group are our children and especially those with special needs and so on that need student assistants, okay?

Now, I could talk about the lack of student assistants. I could talk about how we have student assistants on paper but it's really not true what you're being told in terms of what numbers are supposed to be there versus what's really there. Parents being told: Oh, yeah, your child has a student assistant; but what they're not being told is yeah, your child has a student assistant, but that student assistant is also in this

classroom and that classroom and that classroom and they're bouncing back and forth and so on, and your child is not getting the attention that you think your child is getting.

That's a separate issue, but the one I want to just talk about right now in my remaining time is the concept of student assistants getting paid – getting paid – a basic thing, on time and getting paid the hours that they're owed. I've had numerous student assistants reach out to me – I've seen it – they've brought in the paperwork. We cannot seem to manage to pay our student assistants.

They got to keep track of their own hours every payday. They recheck their hours and they look, and they're always shortchanged. Then they might be two weeks, three weeks or four weeks before they get their money. By the time they get the money they're owed, then they're behind again because they made the same errors over again.

I did check with the CEO of the school board. I spoke to the CEO – well, he's not the CEO; I guess he's the deputy minister now – and he acknowledged to me that there's an antiquated payroll system that they're using for student assistants. Now, I don't know why or how that became that way, but he said that it needs to be fixed. There are issues with substitute teachers as well and there's a working group, apparently, with the NLTA and the government to fix similar issues with substitute teachers, but there is no working group when it comes to the student assistants and they're not part of this working group.

So I just say to the Minister of Education, who – and I'm not dumping on the Minister of Education, I'm really not. This issue has long pre-dated her, maybe she's not even aware of it, maybe she is. I don't know but I'm telling you, because I've had discussions with your deputy minister. He's acknowledged that this is a problem and I'm

constantly hearing from student assistants telling me that they're not getting paid.

They are shortchanged all the time. They are not getting what they're owed and then when they go looking for what they're owed, they could be waiting forever to get it. By the time they get it, then they're owed more money for errors again. So whatever you need to do with that payroll system, I encourage you to please get it fixed.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Chair.

I presented a petition in the House today. For those viewers at home, especially in the District of Bonavista, you have three minutes to present a petition and the petition, today, has such significance to a lot of residents in Newfoundland and Labrador and, usually, all in situations where children are involved. I can speak from situations in my district that brings the petition forward, but I know there are others. I referenced in my petition, of the gentleman who has been estranged from his son in Wabush and he sent a letter to each of us. Do I know the gentleman? I do not. All I know is that I know that the Member for Lake Melville, apparently, was the only one of 40 of us who responded. I knew that I was presenting the petition on that matter, but I didn't relay that on.

So it doesn't only occur in the District of Bonavista, it occurs everywhere in the province. The problem is this: I would never stand up with a petition on such a critical issue if I didn't check with a lawyer. I know that I've got and I'll give you some quotes from that lawyer in a short time that'll give you someone internal to the system as to what their indication would be of the civil court, Family Court matters regarding children separation.

Many people have complained about costly procedures, excessive wait times and difficulty in enforcing court orders. When I was finished my three-minute address and tried to pack everything in there, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology stood and spoke, very well, on the issue and I think for the viewers that are still watching, he's a lawyer. He would have a background in it. He was Justice Minister at one time. He would. The only thing I'm saying is that the lawyer that I spoke with that's in the system said, nobody comes out of these Family Courts or the civil courts content as to whether justice has been served.

I want to give you and just relate a young dad in my district who one afternoon came home to find that his child was no longer there, a little over two years of age. It occurred in October. He had called the RCMP, the RCMP told him that in such matters where your child is gone then you need to contact and get a lawyer, and you need to go to family court – without getting into a whole lot of detail. He started in October in 2023, in February he connected with a lawyer at that time, a legal aid lawyer, once. He was waiting for court work. He waited another four months. I intervened and I had asked that this person who has been now estranged from his son, for over six months, he's calling to see what's happening, when is he going to get to be able to see his son? Fair question. If none of us have been involved in that situation, I think, we all got the ability to be able to say how concerning that would be.

The time came, before it went to court, the lawyer who was supporting him decided that they weren't going. They were going to have a replacement, and this was October, one year, 12 months later. I was writing the minister, intervening, knowing that it's not an MHA's place but I am representing my constituent. I went to court with him because he wasn't sure whether he was going to have a lawyer or not. Court happened, I asked that I may go in and sit

by the side of him because he was very nervous going to court. I wasn't permitted. He went in on his own; I sat outside. What had happened, he was in there a long time, because he never had representation, and they contacted the legal aid office to get a lawyer on the line in the court proceedings and the lawyer that came on the line knew nothing of the particular case. Therefore, it was postponed.

He was told then to go back to the legal aid office, start the process and go back to the court proceedings again, which he did. The next date that came was February 28; I went with him. But this time, he never had a legal aid lawyer because he couldn't get one to speak with so therefore, he was going on his own, this time to represent himself. I went again and I sat outside. I again asked if I can go in with the young dad. I wasn't permitted, but I'm sure the judge presiding knew I was there outside, but what came of that was a visitation. He's going to get to visit, now, his son who is a year and a half older.

Anybody that's been involved in the education system will know a year and a half is a long time, but a year and a half with a two-year-old child is absolutely a nation of time in a relation-building situation.

So that was a situation with mine. I have another one who went and could have the affordability to hire a lawyer. The minister had asked me after my petition, what are the issues? This person spent over \$10,000 to get access to their child – another. No access came, because, apparently, according to the lawyer I checked with, only if the person who has the child complies.

If they do not comply, the only recourse is to go right straight back to the court again, pay the lawyer if you can. If you can't afford to pay the lawyer, seek Legal Aid. Those are the recourse that's left because the RCMP does not enforce court orders, the Sheriff's Office does not enforce court orders, therefore, it's on goodwill. How many

children out in Newfoundland and Labrador have been estranged from a parent for no reason other than that particular court order not being adhered to and no enforcement?

I know my time is getting down short already. One thing I would say: Research the long-term consequences for alienation of children – not being with a parent that you once had. Just the title would be, you got the mental health problems, you got relationship difficulties which science and research would state, chances are you may be inclined to have parenting challenges going forward. There may be some anger issues that would evolve that the school system may have to deal with, fear and anxiety. Every one of us in this House are going to look at it and say that it's all relatable stuff. If you had a child that was estranged and kept from a parent, what would we expect to be different? What would we expect to be different in that situation?

I would say we need to have a look at what we do. The lawyer that I had spoken with had stated that the system is broken. It is totally broken. I know if I could put my hand around that sheet, I'd read it out verbatim what he had said, but you can probably tell that I'm having trouble finding that, but that's what he stated. If both parties agree and they're mutually agreeable, the system will work. But if there's discourse between the two parents and the two sides, the system fails almost exclusively according to this lawyer. My question was, what are the percentages? The vast majority do not agree.

So when I said the 5,000 children out there with child support, they all go through that same system. It's not the payment which might be operating quite well; it is the injury and the damage that are created with the young children in Newfoundland and Labrador. The laws need to be changed and that's what this House is for.

Thank you very much, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

It's always a privilege, of course, to stand here in the House of Assembly. This is my second time for this year, because we were back here for a special sitting as we all know, for the special debate around the MOU with the renegotiation of the Churchill Falls. So it's always a great privilege and honour to stand here and represent the great district and the people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

I just want to give a recap of some things that we've successfully managed to achieve this past year in my district. I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everybody who contributed to what I would consider to be the most successful Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games in the history of our province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: – that were held in Bay Roberts, this past summer. So hats off to all the volunteers who came together. They displayed utmost class and professionalism and hospitality. Of course, the town staff, the employees for Bay Roberts, as well as council and all the neighbouring communities who came together because, as we do know, it certainly was a team approach with the host town being Bay Roberts.

Also just want to do some recap, I had the privilege of having the Premier come to my district just before Christmas to announce with me a brand new fire truck for the Town of Bay Roberts as well. That's important.

AN HON. MEMBER: Was it under your tree?

P. PARSONS: Under my tree, yes.

Of course, I was joined by the minister as well for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. PARSONS: I hear the Members chirping over there. I think they want a fire truck. You have to come to Bay Roberts to get a ride on that fire truck.

Anyway, I digress. Also, hats off to the Town of Spaniards Bay and their volunteer firefighters. We were successful in securing a fire truck just last year. We're waiting on arrival for that one for this year. Harbour Grace, also, last year received a high-angle rescue working with them because, you know, they all come together as a team. We know when something happens, whether it be on the Veterans Memorial Highway, Chair, or in one of our neighbouring communities throughout the region, everybody comes together.

These firefighters, I always say, are among the most bravest and courageous volunteers because when everybody is seeking shelter and safety, of course, when there's a disaster or an accident or some sort of trauma, it's these men and women that are running into these situations, of course, putting their lives at risk. I want to thank their families for the support that they also provide them in doing this great work.

Some important roadwork, of course, that's been done. I want to thank my colleagues for working with me. I'm always advocating road maintenance, road repair throughout the District of Harbour Grace and every one of my communities. Jamie's Way, in particular, in Harbour Grace – named after a cousin of mine – by the Danny Cleary Centre, we managed to get that road repaired. Bryant's Cove Road, joining Upper Island Cove as well as Bryant's Cove and the list goes on.

So just as my constituents know, I am always advocating for them. We have great roadwork done throughout the district over

the past several years, so I'm certainly content and happy about that and I will continue advocating for all of our priorities throughout the year.

Also I just want to give a special hats off. As we know, we have celebrated Confederation 75. The Member for Bonavista is saying something but I can't –

C. PARDY: She does good work.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, to my colleague across the way.

As we know, we celebrated Confederation 75 and it was the Premier's good idea to create these special medals to present to people who have made outstanding contributions to their communities, in particular seniors and particularly those who typically don't get that mention as they may deserve. I'm happy to congratulate the residents throughout my district who I have presented those medals to. They make great contributions to our community through their volunteerism, and I actually have a few more to present. So I look forward to that.

Also, I just want to talk about some priorities before I get into some accomplishments that I have done throughout my Department of Women and Gender Equality. The Bay Arena – as we know, the Bay Arena serves as a community hub. It's located in Bay Roberts but it certainly is a regional facility. It's a very popular – it's where I learned how to figure skate and play hockey and I'm going to be advocating.

I recently met with the town council in Bay Roberts. They're in need of major repair. So I just want to reassure my constituents that that certainly is on the priority list, as well as the Danny Cleary Centre just down the way in Harbour Grace. I represent two wonderful hockey clubs in my district, so I'm supporting the Rovers as well as the CeeBees. We have a lot of great hockey players from my district, so hats off again

and to everybody for doing their part, for really contributing to our communities.

Also at this time, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of St. John's City Councillor Debbie Hanlon. Debbie was a friend to many people here, including myself and I think Debbie was a friend to anybody who crossed her path. I'll never forget those big, bouncing, beautiful red locks that she had in her hair and, of course, her smile. I describe her as she was determined to help make this province a better place for everybody. So thank you, we're grateful for her service on council and again our sincere condolences for Debbie's family and Debbie's loved ones. She certainly will be dearly missed and she's certainly gone far too soon.

Also, as we know, and as I mentioned here earlier in the House through a Ministerial Statement, we're coming upon International Women's Day. I want to recognize, of course, many who contribute to raising women up, women and gender-diverse and girls across Newfoundland and Labrador. There will be many celebratory events happening.

I'm actually going to be speaking tomorrow and I'm going to be joined by colleagues, I know, down at the Delta tomorrow, hosted by PerSISStence Theatre. They're doing amazing work. Notably the Raise Her Up campaign, just last week I announced \$25,000 extra to go towards the Armine Nutting Gosling campaign, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: As we know, Armine Gosling led the charge for when women won – and I will say won – and gained the right to vote 100 years ago here in Newfoundland and Labrador. So we'll be celebrating that milestone. Actually, the anniversary for that is April 3. We're going to be having some special ceremonies in partnership with the Speaker's office and with my department.

I want to thank my team in the Office of Women and Gender Equality for a lot of the heavy lifting that they have done in preparation for these events and these wonderful celebratory events that we will be hosting. I encourage everybody to come and participate and take the time to congratulate women and gender diverse for their accomplishments. Because, as we know, women are capable and women can do it and it's about making space at the table and supporting women in these leadership roles. As we know, it's very important to promote equality and society needs to see their governments, industries and leadership reflect the society that we live in.

Also, Chair, something I was very proud of that happened actually just recently in my district in February. We were able to negotiate the signing of an agreement with Shoppers Drug Mart to support menstrual equity here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Shoppers Drug Mart has donated 4.7 million menstrual products to advance menstrual equity here in our great province, valued at approximately \$1.9 million. This donation will be distributed over the next three years to schools, post-secondary institutions, women's centres, including food banks and much more across our great province.

Newfoundland and Labrador will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to distribute menstrual products free of charge to post-secondary institutions and the other community organizations. Of course, as we know, this initiative builds on our province's 2021 plan to make menstrual products available to students in the K-to-12 system. It was implemented in January 2022.

The initial delivery of products is scheduled for March, this month, in 2025, this year, with the government responsible for regional distribution and maintenance. So much appreciation, of course, to my colleagues in the Department of Education, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Health and Community Services for

assisting with this work. There is lots of great work that's being done.

I just have a short amount of time left here for this particular time in talking, but we have successfully negotiated the signing of a \$13.6 million bi-lateral agreement with the federal government. What that means, that money, \$13.6 million will flow to our province that will go to our stakeholders across our great province for tailor-made initiatives to ultimately combat gender-based violence. To date, we have about \$6 million of that spent.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our stakeholders on our front lines who are offering this life-saving work, because they are the experts and I am proud to be their minister to help put the resources in their hands to get this very important work done. They are ultimately saving lives. They may never know the impacts that they are having on those that are reaching out for help.

I also want to give a hats off to Joanne Morrissey. She's in North River, in my neighbouring district. Every year she puts off an amazing event at All Hallows school in North River. I will be attending this year that special event to recognize International Women's Day. I think I'm going to be joined as well by my colleague, the MHA for the District of Harbour Main, so it's going to be a great time. Thanks to Joanne for so much she does and, of course, all the volunteers who come together.

On that note, Chair, I will take my seat. Happy International Women's Day to all my colleagues and everybody across our great province. I look forward to speaking again soon.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

This is my first time talking on Interim Supply for this year. Chair, one of the things I would like to talk a little bit about is the responsibility we have as MHAs to ensure that the province, the government continues with business and that is what Interim Supply is all about. But also our roles as MHAs can be quite stressful. It's a difficult job.

Anyone that sits in this House of Assembly can tell you about the emotional strain of having constituents reach out to them for help. A lot of times it's with health care. Sometimes it would be about the cost of living, food, basically securing a place to live. All of these things sometimes result in our constituents reaching out to us because they've been failed elsewhere.

When it comes to us and we hear the stories about where they have not been able to get help, it puts a sense of responsibility back on us. Chair, that can be quite stressful.

For me, sometimes in actual fact, I do find it difficult. Now, in terms of being an MHA and getting up and speaking on bills, getting up and doing presentations, formulating what's going on, to me, that's not stressful. It's never been a problem for me. What I find stressful is the emotional toil that a lot of the constituents in our districts face. That has a lot to do with the services that are not available to them.

Services when we're growing up that we take for granted that would be there to help us. Then we look to our elders, trying to access health care, trying to be able to get cardiac surgery, trying to actually be able to get prescriptions filled. That's a lot for MHAs to take on. A lot of times, our constituents don't understand and sometimes don't accept the limitations that we have as people who are elected to serve in this House of Assembly.

That's one of the reasons why we get up on this side and do the presentations of petitions, bringing forward concerns from our constituents. That's why we get up here day after day and ask questions. I found it disrespectful for us to be called out for not asking the questions on tariffs, when, in actual fact, if you listen to the questions that we asked that day, were the questions that the people wanted asked about failings of health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Also, some scandalous behaviours of where things were purchased with taxpayers' money, the people's money, and then sold off at great loss. I don't think you could call it depreciation, things like that where we need government and people responsible. It's so important because that is about the confidence of the public, the confidence of the people in our government, and if the people lose confidence, then really what happens is, I guess, people start to lose hope.

In my district, it's really, really hard. For a long period of time I stopped posting anything negative on social media. I had to go to my people to find things that I could post that were positive. I found that in the individuals who actually were outstanding in terms of helping others, advocating for others, lending a hand, supporting people, also, young athletes performing, people who graduated, parents so proud, those positive things meant a huge deal to people in my district. Even though we suffer to pay our bills in terms of the cost of electricity, the cost of stove oil, the cost of gasoline, the cost of food, the lack of housing, the supports and infrastructure.

Now, in actual fact, when we look elsewhere, we see a lot of supports and services in infrastructure. For us, we feel like sometimes we don't even belong in this province. Well, in actual fact, we feel like we're treated as if we don't belong, and there's a big difference, Chair.

Earlier today, I talked a little bit about the people from Nain who were awarded the 75th Anniversary of Confederation Medal, but, in actual fact, I didn't state what those medals were about and a lot of people may not know. These medals pay tribute to those who have made significant contributions to their communities and the province over the last 75 years; however, they may not have received a public recognition, an acknowledgment fitting to their contribution. So for us to be able to give these medals – prestigious medals – for their contribution, their tireless effort, their dedication to help others, it's so, so important. That's what we did. We went out and we sought those individuals to make sure that they felt supported.

So for me, access to health care is really a big thing. Earlier today, I talked about people in my district who are being failed by the health care system because they can't access adequate health care in a timely fashion or people sometimes are diagnosed with a terminal illness and then shortly after they pass away. That's a real failure to the individual but, also, it does not prepare families for the loss of the individual and the whole community suffers, the whole North Coast suffers and it really undermines our confidence in the system.

One thing that I have not raised in the House of Assembly is the horrible service we have for our prescriptions, our medications that we need to maintain our health care, to be healthy. The reason why I have not – I only have so much time, I only have so many resources that I, myself, as an individual MHA can dedicate. I have a lot of confidence because Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development has been advocating to solve a lot of the problems with the prescriptions. I've dealt a lot with the deputy minister and the minister on this issue, but what I feel now is that I have to raise the issues for the lack of access actually for prescriptions.

Some of the things that I've encountered is I've had somebody call me worried about her husband because his medication – she called it his medication to treat his blood clots, actually it's to prevent them, blood thinners – were held up in Goose Bay. He was going on several weeks without his prescription and she was really, really worried that he was going to form blood clots because he was susceptible to forming blood clots. In actual fact, he did. Luckily, it was in his lower leg.

So for us, accessing prescriptions. I've had situations where a lady called me and she said that it's now four times she's ran out of her prescriptions for diabetes. She's ran out of her prescriptions; this is the fourth time. She quoted sometimes it's weather that prevents them from coming in, but she said a lot of times when the hospital flight comes in, the meds are not on there.

I've gotten calls from women because their birth control is delayed. She's not getting her birth control. For every woman, you have to realize that you have the ability now to be able to plan your family. That is something that we have in Canada, is plan when you're going to get pregnant. It's a little bit more complicated than that, but, in actual fact, no time in Canada, in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, should we not be able to access our prescriptions – birth control.

One of the things that has really touched my heart is one of the seniors that I've know, big, strapping, healthy man who did so much for his community. He participated in the Canada Rangers. He was very mechanically inclined. He suffered complications from a surgery in Goose Bay. He was suffering and he called me multiple times because he was struggling to get his prescriptions. In actual fact, in talking to him, there were weeks when he didn't access his prescriptions. Chair, that person has passed away and we will never really know the truth of how detrimental him being

delayed access to his prescriptions had on his death.

These are serious situations, Chair. For me, when we look at Interim Supply and the business of the province, we support Interim Supply but, also, we have to call the government to account on issues that the constituents want us to raise.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

It's a privilege to stand in the House and speak to Interim Supply. I have a bit of head cold so apologies; I might sound a bit funny.

I guess the first thing I'd like to start off by talking about is how contingency is incredibly important in our Interim Supply. We've recently seen the Government of Nova Scotia, in their budget, they included a \$200-million contingency, so I think that contingency is incredibly important. We don't know what the president of the United States is going to do on a daily basis. He keeps changing his mind, every day there's something new.

I'm going to circle back in a second in terms of Ukrainians, but I think it's important that we have the support and the flexibility to react as industries and employees of Newfoundland and Labrador are impacted in different ways. We can estimate right now what that might look like through the year, but I guarantee that it's going to change between now and next month and the month after. So I think it's incredibly important that we have contingency. I think it's incredibly important that we approve that in our Interim Supply at the moment, Chair.

Just to speak about Interim Supply for a minute. That I think is incredibly important

as well. We're approving the government to spend money. That pays our nurses and doctors and teachers, so that's incredibly important. Without Interim Supply the people of this building, all the public servants across the province won't be able to get paid. I think that's incredibly important to recognize so it's a very important bill, Chair.

I'd also like to talk about tariffs for a minute and what the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills is planning and thinking about. As minister responsible for labour market and skills – not labour, but the skills part of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills – in our department, we execute the Labour Market Development Agreements in partnership with the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

When we pay – we don't, but when people pay into the EI pot, the unemployment insurance pot, that money gets put aside by the federal government and then a big portion of that pot is returned to the provinces in terms of the Labour Market Development Agreements. That money gets distributed to groups, organizations and businesses to help them respond to different changes in industries, labour needs and skills that they might have. We get proposals from businesses and a range of organizations across the province to help them address their own issues that they have in terms of training, skills, the labour market and a range of things. We have a team of experts that can help anyone who is interested in learning more about that.

That, I guess, is the main vehicle in the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills where we, on kind of a bigger scale, help industries react. We work with industry associations. So far I've met

with Trades NL, I've met with the Construction Association, the Construction Safety Association, the Board of Trade, the Labrador Chamber of Commerce and there are a lot more that I just can't think of on the top of my head.

We're working with them in terms of how they can help their members and labour markets. I met with the Federation of Labour a few weeks ago. Those funding vehicles are an excellent way to help organizations react and so that will be a vehicle that we will work with organizations to help them react to the tariffs.

Putting on my Minister of Skills hat, all the ministers across the country, we've had a few chats, and I am expecting that the federal government will increase our Labour Market Development funding. Last year, there was a \$16-million cut from that overall budget. I am expecting and hoping that, in response to the tariffs, one of the federal government's responses is to increase the Labour Market Development funding.

That is funding that, as a government, through this federal EI pot, we can give to organizations, industries and companies to help them maybe weather the storm, maybe retrain. It could look like anything so we are here to work with businesses, with IET I know, to help support them as they navigate these tariff changes and what that might mean for an individual company.

We also have a workforce agreement adjustment protocol within Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; that is when we anticipate, or an employer anticipates future changes to their business. So if they say: In five or six months, my business is going to change or the industry is going to change, whether medium or long term, we can work with them in advance to try and plan for that and to provide funding to help them adjust or change the business practices.

That's a really important protocol that we've revamped and we're ready to help businesses as they become impacted by the tariffs. Hopefully there is as little impact as possible, but we're kind of bracing for the worst and we'll see how it goes. It's challenging to predict how long the tariffs are going to last, obviously, but then also how individual companies will be impacted. We know the fishery and the aquaculture sectors; we know the tech industry; anyone who sells or buys from the United States will be impacted and this is one vehicle that we hope to help businesses and industries.

I also want to mention that we do, from a labour side, in terms of labour mobility, we do have the Fair Registration Practices team within Immigration, Population Growth and Skill. So if anyone has foreign credentials, in a range of sectors, we can help them triage that. If they're underemployed but they think, okay, I have this credential from another country, we can help them triage to try and get them into – I guess, work with them on a pathway to get them back to a recognized credential in Newfoundland and Labrador, to a place where they can be meeting their potential in terms of any skill that they might have.

So we have a dedicated team to that Immigration, Population Growth and Skills and so anyone who feels like they have training from outside the country or another province and they're not able to meet their potential currently in terms of labour market, we can certainly help them create a path, look at funding, a range of things in that area, Chair.

I'd also like to take some time to talk about our immigration numbers. I know in Question Period we've been talking a lot about health care workers, and we have a dedicated team. I just want to thank the team in Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, they go above and beyond to recruit the best health care workers across the globe, Chair, I would say, to Newfoundland and Labrador. We've had great success in

2024, so I just want to highlight some of that, Chair.

It's a bit tricky. Through our economic immigration pathways, all of these people have job offers, they accept a job, then they complete an application and then the federal government has a layer of approval to do, as well. So once they pass us I think 90 per cent of those pass the federal government's layer of approval and then they actually have to buy a plane ticket, fly and arrive here.

So not all of these numbers actually end up, physically, coming here but in 2024 we've seen incredible success in terms of getting through our economic immigration pathways. So just from a health care perspective, Chair, we have three physicians that we've recruited internationally who've accepted jobs, who have made it completely through the process. We have 257 registered nurses, 18 LPNs, 433 PCAs and 291 other health care workers.

I know when we were in the UK, doing these big job fairs in London, I was very impressed, there was this whole auditorium where our team were talking to job seekers. They were very interested, and they were specifically talking about child psychologists. Do you anyone? Highlighting very key areas for Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, where they have trouble recruiting.

Our team works very closely with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to recruit those hard to reach and hard to find jobs. I also wanted to highlight in 2024, 65 early childhood educators and 12 K-to-12 teachers. We are working very closely with a range of organizations to recruit those key skilled workers. But I will say, so last year we had 3,050 economic immigration spaces. The federal government cut that in half. We were able to negotiate back 1,000 spaces, but part of the conditions associated with those spaces is

that only 25 per cent of those spaces can come from out of the country – 75 per cent have to be from people currently in the country.

We anticipate, honestly, Chair, that we will use all of our spaces on health care in 2025. We continue to lobby the federal government for increases to that and more flexibility with the 75 per cent. So unfortunately, that would mean that there will be other industries where people are not able to use our economic immigration pathways, because we're limited by the federal government changes.

We are looking at other federal government pathways where we could direct people. So, for example, there is a francophone federal government pathway we've never had to leverage before, but now because our numbers are cut so much from the economic pathway side, we're going to try and find some francophones, francophone teachers, francophone health care workers, francophone early childhood educators to try and funnel them through other pathways. We're trying to be creative with how we bring in people in key sectors in the province.

Thank you, Chair, it was privilege to chat now and hopefully I'll be able to contribute further during Interim Supply.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for beautiful Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate that. It's always a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and represent the good people of my District of Cape St. Francis. I always remember why I'm here: to be their voice in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: The Member from across the way agrees with me, I appreciate that.

Madam Chair, before I go any further, I want to take a page out of my learned colleague's book from Bonavista. A friend of the House is watching, Rosalie Belbin from Red Bay Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I want to give a shout-out to Rosalie.

I look forward to her daily messages that come in. I have to say, I do appreciate that, so I wanted to give her shout-out then, because I know she's watching, and she will certainly appreciate that.

Madam Chair, I want to say that I'm going to speak to roads in my district. I'm happy to hear from the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, and the beautiful roads she has in her district, the amount of roadwork she has. I do want to speak to roads in my district with respect to the work that needs to be done.

Since I've been in this hon. House, I've had the pleasure of working with four Ministers of Transportation and Infrastructure. A great working relationship with each minister, I have to say. I appreciate the work that's been done. I do know that last year I had an approval in my district for Bauline Line Extension as part of the work that's being done with the neighbouring District of Conception East - Bell Island, and looking forward to that work being done this year. I do hope – my fingers are crossed – that the work will be done this year.

But I do have some other words to say, in particular to Route 20, and the road conditions on Route 20, Madam Chair. I'll give you an example. Earlier this week, at 6 a.m. my phone started going off with messages and emails and phone calls. As you're coming into the Town of Torbay, just past Jack Byrne Regional, there was a

severe pothole in the area. Unfortunately, 11 vehicles were damaged in the space of one hour.

So when you're looking at damage to a vehicle, to put it into context, so the front and rear tire and rim on 11 vehicles were damaged. In addition to that, one young student, a young woman from Torbay, reached out to me to say that front and rear rim, tire and her tie rod end, \$1,200, was damaged. This is unfortunate. It truly is.

Now, I do want to give a shout-out to the Transportation and Infrastructure staff from White Hills who are in my district. I've got to say, they do a great job with what they have, and they were out, had it repaired, but unfortunately 11 vehicles were damaged that day. This is unacceptable.

I do know the amount of roadwork that's needed on Route 20. I've done a petition on it in the House. I've spoken to the former and current Transportation Minister with respect to work that needs to be done coming through Flatrock into Pouch Cove. It's quite an amount of work.

We do have some terrible spots in our district, and I'm certainly hoping that that will be addressed this coming construction season. So I'll say that for the benefit of my constituents who are listening, I'm always asking and advocating for them because we are here to represent our constituents, to be their voice, and to bring forward the matters that are crucial and are important to them.

So when we look at the province as a whole, I understand, and all of my colleagues here in His Majesty's Official Opposition understand the parameters that the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure have to work under, no doubt. All we want, as my colleague from Harbour Main said earlier, the best way to do it are the worst roads get done first. It takes the politics out of paving. If we are looking at that and looking for solutions –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: – I would not begrudge any Member here in this House of work being done in their district. All I ask is that it be done fairly, that it be looked at with fresh eyes, and to have a clean decision made on it with respect to work that has to be done. It's plain and simple.

I do know that thanks to the town council in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, one of the five towns in my district, we are working together with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, like we have been for the last number of years, with respect to the re-routing of Marine Drive. I'm sure some of you are aware of the coastal erosion that's happening in my district, and it's undermining the road on Marine Drive in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove.

So I do thank the current Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and his staff and officials for working with the town and myself, keeping me informed as to what is going forward. But I do know that it's been several years now, Madam Chair, that we're working on this. This has to be done, I hope, in this construction season because we have to re-route a road, it affects personal property, and I understand it takes time. This is not an overnight fix. But I do know it does take time, and I appreciate that.

I, and, of course, the council as well in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, have been very patient and working with the former and current ministers with respect to re-routing of that road because the coastal erosion there is causing a grave concern. Last winter, we had staff from Transportation and Infrastructure who refused to work on that road with one of the flyers, salting and sanding, plowing the roads, because they felt it was unsafe.

To the minister's credit, they came in, a contract was put out and the work was being done. It doesn't solve the problem long term. So I do hope that the minister

and his officials do look at this with respect to making this change, and for a long-term fix, is what we're looking for, to go through.

As I said, I touched on Route 20, I touched on Bauline Line Extension, Marine Drive and, of course, Route 21 as well, in my district. We did have some repair work on that. But in addition to all that, Madam Chair – and I confirmed this, I spoke with my constituency assistant and we looked into the amount of grading that's done. The amount of grading, which is very important as well because if you don't have proper grading done, it undermines the shoulders, it undermines the asphalt, the driving surface and, of course, it comes into more money.

To the best of my knowledge, the last time grading was done in my district was 10 years ago – to the best of my knowledge. I am man enough to stand here and be corrected if someone wants to correct me on it. But I can certainly tell you, 10 years without proper grading in the district is irresponsible. It's simply irresponsible. I asked where the grader was that would do the work in my district and, of course, that particular one piece of machinery goes from depot to depot, trying to keep up with the amount of work in the various districts.

So when we're coming back to proper infrastructure, to have the proper tools for our Transportation and Infrastructure staff to do the work properly so that my constituents and the constituents of Newfoundland and Labrador have safe roads to drive on, this is what we need to keep in mind first and foremost.

I do hope that the Minister of Transportation and his officials do hear what I'm saying today with respect to, not only the roadwork, but the grading that's necessary as well. Because without the grading, it undermines the asphalt, and we don't have, unfortunately, safe driving surfaces. Of course, we've already had enough vehicles

damaged with respect to the potholes and what have you.

I have places in my district, Madam Chair, where if you go off the road, if you go off the asphalt, you have a dip of six to eight inches. That's how deep the drops are when you go into the shoulder. I took pictures and forwarded them on to the department, and one of the pictures that I showed, showed the original layer of asphalt with the white line, and the next layer of asphalt on top, and it's below the original layer of asphalt. So we're talking six to eight inches. If a car goes off that in the nighttime, wet weather, you're going to do damage, and I hope that we don't have any serious injuries from that. So, Madam Chair, I do hope that the minister and his staff are listening with respect to the roadwork that needs to be done in my district.

Madam Chair, 10 minutes goes awfully quickly, but I do have a minute left, and I may have a chance to speak on this again. I want to touch on education and the schools and teachers in my district. We are hearing a lot of negative feedback with respect to what's going on in schools, especially this past week. My colleague from Topsail - Paradise and I had a chat about it earlier with respect to what's going on.

I'll just say this, Madam Chair, the working conditions for our teachers are the learning conditions for our students. When we want to provide a quality education for the students of our province, we have to look at the working conditions that the teachers are in. Being married to a teacher, I know full well the daily struggles that she has in teaching and, of course, with her colleagues. But I can certainly tell you there are many, many areas that we need improvement.

One teacher reached out to me – she lives in my district, but she doesn't work there – and she says the language barrier that she has to deal with, with new Canadians that we're welcoming into our province and into

our classroom, more than half cannot speak English. Without the proper supports in her classroom, she find it difficult to teach and, of course, then every student then falls behind.

Madam Chair, my time is up, but I do hope I have a chance to speak on this again. I always enjoy an opportunity to stand and represent the people of my district, and I thank the Members opposite for their attention.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the hon. Member for speaking before me to identifying my friend as well, Rosalie, for watching this. Any time you get the opportunity to say hello to someone who's watching, it's nice. I know our colleague from Bonavista tends to do it every time he gets to speak. So it's always nice to hear those things.

Today I'm really excited that I get the opportunity to speak to Interim Supply. I think it's an important bill that we bring forward, or piece of legislation that we've got to debate – or resolution, I should say. It's really, really important for us to understand for the continuation of government services. Each and every department that we each represent on this side and that our colleagues frequently call for their constituents about the services they require, it's all paid for based on the Interim Supply.

If we do not get Interim Supply, then our staff – you always hear about this in the United States. You always hear about these shutdowns that would tend to happen based on not being granted Supply. That's what we're talking about today. Now, we've never

had that in this House and we would never get it again in this House, I don't expect, because everyone on both sides of the House understands how important the services are that we provide and won't use it as a political football for anything. They tend to want to make sure that those services are continued.

From my perspective, I think one of the most important things that we do in this House of Assembly is get the opportunity to talk about our districts but get the opportunity to talk about the investments that we would like to see and/or that have been made in budgets that are coming and/or we would like to see coming. So in my current portfolio, Minister of Justice and Public Safety, there are significant amounts of investments that have come or will be coming in budget '25-'26.

From my standpoint, as we know and talked about many, many times on both sides of the House, how the public safety and security of people in our communities is paramount for all of us – I think the hon. Member before me talked about the safety on our roads and it's very good for him to do so.

I'll talk a little bit about the public safety, so people feel safe in their homes, in their communities. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, on many occasions, has talked about instances that have happened in his community and some of those changes that we're working with them, the community, to try to make their community a safer place. But part of that happens with working with an engagement with stakeholders, and we've got a very strong relationship with stakeholders in our department and we've got a fantastic group of employees that really care deeply about the work they provide for the people of our province that we all represent.

Most recently, some of those investments that we made that I want to highlight a little bit that are what we're talking about directly

with Interim Supply: the investments to our justice system and our criminal justice system. You would know that in the fall of the year, we announced investments that we were making for some \$24 million in new tools and technologies that would enhance the access to justice and strengthening the public trust in the justice system. We announced those in the fall of this year in anticipation because we knew there would be a lot of lead time to try to get employment started, get the job descriptions out there, ensuring that we have employees ready to start as soon as we can into the new year because we know that recruitment and HR processes take time.

But these are multi-year investments that now that we've got them announced and working towards them in the budget cycle, we're all going to get the opportunity to vote on that when the budget comes here to this very House. But we get the opportunity in the Interim Supply to at least discuss some of those opportunities that we talked about.

So one of those was that \$24-million investment, which included some 25 new correctional officers, and I think everyone in this House would understand how important having those new 25 correctional officers would be to the system. That would include also another 18 new Crown attorneys, 14 new deputy sheriffs, a manager of court security in Labrador.

This funding will support, as well, the digital transformation for the entire justice system. I don't want to understate how important that piece is for streamlining the justice system, upgrading these systems, the hardware, the software and the processes to improve access to justice and a streamlined delivery. I know everyone in this House of Assembly have had constituents that are in the justice system, that have had time frames either delayed by their lawyer or the Crown or otherwise. But making sure that access to justice is timely, efficient and as open and transparent as it can be for all of the constituents that we represent.

Additional to that \$24 million in the fall, we also in this budget announced over \$20 million to invest in the establishment of a 10-person joint task force which is comprised of the RNC and the RCMP that are going to target weapons, drugs and contraband enforcement. This critical incident response activities that we talk about on a regular basis in this very House, I don't think there's one person in this House of Assembly that won't be supportive of what a joint task force can do to help communities in which they operate.

Additional to that, there are five new RCMP officers placed in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and I know my colleague from Lake Melville will understand how important that was for his community. That was a recommendation from the public safety review that was completed by the Policing Transformation Working Group that we've done a significant amount of talking about in this very House of Assembly.

In addition to that, with that \$20 million that we announced in the fall, there was an additional 19 police officers that we've talked about. I think the hon. Member for Exploits talked about additional policing resources, and I know he's keenly intent on what I'm talking about right now because those 19 additional officers are going to be put in place based on the community requirements and based on what the Policing Transformation Working Group comes up with as the needs require. So that's an important piece that can help communities, not unlike the Member for Exploits had highlighted in his community.

These officers, as I said, will be allocated based on the Policing Transformation Working Group and the communities that they're operating in and trying to make sure those communities have the best policing services they possibly can.

There was also an RNC leadership position for the intimate partner violence unit. I know that the Minister Responsible for Gender –

P. PARSONS: Women and Gender Equality.

B. DAVIS: – Women and Gender Equality will understand how important that RNC leadership position for the intimate partner violence unit is for the RNC. That's an important piece; we all know that that's an epidemic taking place in our country and, in turn, the global community. We understand that having a leadership person pushing the envelope on that would be an important piece for us and, also, the ongoing support for the police training, which we talked about earlier.

The hon. Member for Harbour Main talked about that many times yesterday and the day before, and I think the day before that as well. I think it's important that we understand that that support will go into training, equipment, fleet management, operational requirements as those initiatives come up over the next period of time.

We've also talked about the proclamation of the *Correctional Services Act*. That's an important one from our standpoint. On February 3, that received proclamation and it was originally drafted with recommendations made out of the 2008 *Decades of Darkness* report. This is all about modernizing policies and operational processes.

A new inmate disciplinary process, which is an important piece and it had been asked for by stakeholders that we constantly have meetings and discussions with. It's updating the policies to be more responsible to particular needs of individual matters such as gender-diverse individuals, Indigenous inmates and inmates of other cultures. It also deals with, which is a key piece, the probationary officers and how they can supervise offenders on bail, providing the offenders meet certain criteria of the bail supervision program.

I could go on a little bit further in this, but I just want to highlight one more thing in the

little amount of time I have. My colleague from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis said it best, 10 minutes goes very, very fast. The *Law Enforcement Identity Management Act* that we talked about in this House a number of months ago that leads into ensuring that we basically restrict the use of police paraphernalia for sale and fabrication.

This comes out of the mass casualty incident that happened in Nova Scotia. We're only the second jurisdiction to put that in place but we wanted to make sure, through stakeholder engagement with our police, the regulations are being worked on now with those individuals. That's an important piece for us to want to try to instill that public confidence in the police system, making sure that those individuals that are wearing the uniform are actually police officers or peace officers and making sure that they are protecting our interest and not their own. I think that's an important piece to end on.

I encourage everyone to support the Interim Supply process that we're going through right now. Obviously, I encourage everyone, as we get to the budgetary process, to look at these investments that we've made in Justice and Public Safety, in particular, but all of the investments we've made across our government. Because the investments that we've made are to ensure the public that we all, each and every one of us collectively, 40 of us who represent, needs are being met.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this very piece of legislation.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

The saying: May you live in interesting times; it's more of a curse because interesting times are about trouble, uncertainty, and even a little bit chaotic.

Certainly, in this time right now, with the tariffs and the volatile and chaotic actions of the president, we are definitely in interesting times. I was thinking it reminds me a little bit of being in a job action or a strike. The threat of a job action or the threat of a strike is where you can often get the solutions resolved, but once you're in a strike, there's really no way out of it except through it. I think we're in that period now where we're trying to find a way through it.

The Leonard Cohen song: there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in. I think we're starting to see those cracks, if we follow the media. I think more than ever, we're seeing here in Canada the importance of being unified, not only between provinces, but within the provinces as well.

That brings me to the Aspen Institute Laboratories of Democracy that I attended recently in Dresden, Germany, because it brought together provincial and state legislators from Germany, from Canada and from the United States. From Canada, there were plenty from across the country from different provinces, the US, both Republican and Democrat.

I think very clearly what they heard, and especially, I guess, in the United States, what they heard from us Canadians is the real impact and the anger Canadians felt at this, really what amounts to a war, albeit a tariff war, on Canada. I heard from the German delegates and from a number of people, including the president of the Saxon State Parliament, I guess the real present threat of Russia. The dismay at the United States abandoning its responsibilities, very clearly stated that this was a war of aggression by Russia on Ukraine. And if anything, I heard from our legislators in Germany, from the Democratic legislators and from my colleagues across Canada is the need for unity. There is some hope there.

The purpose of this was to, more or less, bring legislators from different parts of these

three democratic societies to talk about what social cohesion means, about the sense of belonging, of social well-being, of social participation, of civic and political participation. What it means to be socially mobile, social justice, trust in people and institution.

One of the things, of course, you can talk about social cohesion but at the base of this, sort of like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is the need for your basic things: food, shelter and safety.

I think it's very clear from talking to my German colleagues is that in their recent elections that the extreme right wing has capitalized on the fact that many people are struggling right now and there's anger. They've used that as a wedge to divide society and thrown even the German democratic system into question and they desperately want to avoid what they're seeing in the United States.

But this brings me back then, I guess, to the mother I spoke of today in Question Period, because it's hard to participate in society, it's hard to talk about trusting in institutions, having a sense of belonging or well-being, of being able to participate in society and in our political world if you're struggling to put food on the table, to find a place in which to live, to afford your medications, to make sure that your children go to school with the necessary resources.

I know in my own district there's more than one person that visits the emergency room in St. Clare's because they basically have nowhere to sleep – it's warm.

A few weeks ago, before I had a town hall on affordability and in going around to a number of the apartment buildings in my district, I ran into one gentleman who's 65 – he's my age – he's hoping to slow down by the time he's 70. But he's working 76 hours a week. He's a home care worker. He leaves one job at night, the next morning he's into the next job. I said where do you

get the time to sleep, because sometimes at night the patient he's caring for at night, he can catch a few hours.

He's putting money away, he says – apart from paying for the rent, because the rent is going up again. He's putting money away to make sure that there's enough money there to bury him when he dies. I don't know if he has family, but he's making sure that that's taken care of.

When we talk about participation, it's about taking care of these basic needs. Why I guess I so push this issue about the need for rent and vacancy controls to keep people housed. More about the need for non-market community-based housing. About finding some way for young people, young families who want to afford a house that's affordable.

When I bought my house, many years ago, I do remember it was in the double-digits, around 18 per cent, I think, the mortgage rates. It wasn't much less than a credit card at that time. It was significant. But right now, rates may be down, but prices are up and from what we're seeing it's probably going to get worse.

We know that people are struggling with electric bills, and yet we have Newfoundland and Labrador Power came looking for a 10.6 per cent increase. Who are they benefiting, their investors or the people of the province? Even with rate mitigation, there is still the effects of Muskrat Falls, which, down the road, will be an asset to this province, but right now people are struggling.

In education – well, I taught for 32 years and four years as NLTA president. My brother was showing the most recent video of what amounts to an assault in a school, and I know that when it comes down to it, that teachers are struggling too, in the classrooms that are often a bit too large, to make sure that students have a safe and caring school environment. But I will tell you

that I think there are other issues at play as well that need to be addressed. I can't speak to the specific, but it's heartbreaking to watch.

We have parents who are seeking assessments and supports for their children who are in need for various learning disabilities, but they aren't meeting it.

So, I think, Chair, in my 14 seconds that are left, there are many ways that we need to make sure that when we're looking at this budget or this Interim Supply that we're putting supports in place for people who are most vulnerable.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand again here today. I just want to echo some things some of my fellow colleagues have said on both sides of the floor with respect to the passing of friend and former colleague Debbie Hanlon. I knew Debbie from my time, as we were both realtors back in the day, and got to know her very well in the seven years I served on St. John's City Council.

Debbie always had a big smile, big hair, big personality and was always a force full of life and she should certainly brighten any room she went in, so I just want to pass along my condolences that she will be missed.

I stand before today to discuss Interim Supply. As we know, this is a critical piece of legislation and a measure that ensures the seamless operation of our province's public services. That is not merely a procedural necessity, but it's a testament to the commitment in maintaining the well-being and prosperity of Newfoundland and

Labrador and, more specifically, its cherished community, for me, as Waterford Valley.

The Interim Supply Act allocates, as we already said, just over \$4 billion which is a substantial sum of money and it underscores the dedication to sustaining essential public services during the transitional time before we approve the full budget. This funding is pivotal to ensuring our health care facilities remain operational, our educational institutions continue to nurture our young minds, and our infrastructure projects continue to proceed without interruptions.

In Waterford Valley, this funding is specifically important and it's both significant and tangible. In my case, our schools such as St. Mary's, St. John Bosco, Waterford Valley, Hazelwood and Beaconsfield, we rely on the money coming in from the Interim Supply to provide quality education, supportive services for our teachers and our students.

As we all know, and I'm sure the Third Party's leader can attest to this, education is the foundation upon which our province is built. It ensures our children have the resources they need to succeed and it certainly –

AN HON. MEMBER: A great department.

J. KORAB: It is a great department. Thank you, Minister.

It's certainly a priority for this government. Teachers and schools, staff and students all benefit from this Interim Supply, which provides funding for salaries, school programming and critical support services.

Just to touch on health care, and, for me, including Waterford Valley, this is critical for delivery of health care services. For me, with the mental health facility we have down in Waterford Valley, and as well, the building which should be completed this

year, the new mental health and addictions facility that will happen there on the Crosstown, which is a vital piece of infrastructure and needed and the proximity of being attached to the current Health Sciences and Janeway removes that stigma. The location is a good location, so this Interim Supply will help move that along and get that open and get the services and support that's needed for our residents.

A vital component in my district, and the fabric of the district, is the Longshoremen's Protective Union, LSPU, International Longshoremen's Association, 1953. So they were established – sorry, 1953 is the union. They were established in 1903, and the LSPU is the oldest active union in our province here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of these workers are from Shea Heights, and there are around 300 dock workers that offload cargo and general cargo right here on the docks at St. John's. These dedicated individuals have been, again, dedicated to moving this cargo for 134 years, which is absolutely amazing.

The \$4 billion, if passed, in authorizing the Interim Supply Act is crucial in supporting initiatives and safeguards that promote economic growth. Furthermore, Interim Supply funding enables us to invest in our workforce development programs, ensuring our labour force is equipped with necessary skills to meet the industry needs. This is particularly important in sectors like marine transport where technological advances and global competition requires continuous upskilling and adaptation.

Just talk a little bit about municipalities, communities and Local Service Districts. So municipalities rely heavily on funding from the government for public services, transport, sanitation, emergency response and the list goes on. This Interim Supply ensures that local governments receive the funds they need to help support, not only their residents at a community level, but our residents as well at a provincial level.

Just an example of this recently – public transport in the metro area, and that's not just St. John's; that's Mount Pearl and expanded on out into Paradise and, hopefully, CBS at some point. But the City of St. John's is purchasing new hybrid buses and electric buses, as well as upgrading the Metrobus facility. So there are going to be seven 40-foot buses, eight hybrid buses and nine zero-emissions buses.

This will be added to the fleet and this will allow Metrobus to phase out diesel buses, eventually. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, we've got about \$16.7 million, ourselves, gone into that, as well as funding from the feds and the city. These projects will help reduce emissions in the metro region and will serve as a step towards Metrobus and St. John's meeting *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act* target.

Something that is near and dear to me, obviously, is sport. This year is the Year of Sport. I can honestly say I had nothing to do with it getting named, but here it is. We all know the role that sports play and the critical they play in our community. It promotes physical activity, health and well-being and also community engagement.

I know the MHA had brought up earlier about sports in Mount Pearl - Southlands area. It encourages a healthy lifestyle and can help prevent chronic illness. The physical activities, there are a number of benefits. People learn teamwork, perseverance, leadership. They foster a social connection. They bring people together. Whether you're on the field, whether you're off the fields, parents, kids, students, guardians, and it brings people together and, in many communities, it's the backbone of the community.

So for young people who are participating in sports, it enhances personal development, it builds confidence and provides opportunities for future success. On a larger

scale, sports contribute to economic growth, job creation, tourism and industry development. Whether at a recreational level or professional level, sports inspire individuals, unites communities and plays a vital role in shaping a healthier, more-connected society.

This summer, as all of us know, most of us should know by now, in 2025 we have the Canada Summer Games here in St. John's in the metro area. I never ever did make a Canada Games team, so I'm excited to watch.

You know, the games will bring together a lot of people. It showcases our young talent and one of the things that happens from a Canada Games is legacy. You've only got to look to the 1977 Canada Games – which I wasn't born at; I know some people here were, but the Aquarena as an example. That was built for the 1977 Canada Games and it's undergoing renos right now for these games. The track that's going to be built, which is an amazing facility, down there on the MUN campus as well as the Centre for Excellence. Things like that are going to be vital, not only to these games, but to our generations of athletes moving forward.

Something a lot of people don't realize when it comes to sport and certainly this Canada Games, there's a major economic benefit and they expect the 2025 Canada Summer Games in St. John's to have an economic benefit north of \$120 million. That's not just in the metro area, that's all over this province.

As everyone knows, a lot of people want an excuse to come to this beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, so they'll come early, they'll watch the games, they'll stay late so it's a benefit for tourism and for all involved.

Just in conclusion on this *Interim Supply Act, 2025*, it's more than just the financial instrument, to me it's a reflection on our

commitments and the prosperity and the well-being of Newfoundland and Labrador and more specifically, for me, Waterford Valley. By enhancing and continuing the operation of these essential services that I mentioned, supporting our local industries and investing in our workforce, we are laying the foundation for a resilient and thriving future. So let us continue to work together on both sides of the floor and strive towards a brighter future for all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report progress and 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 adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports that the Committee have considered

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

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred, directed they have made some progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee sit again?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister for Industry, Energy and Technology, 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. on Monday.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.