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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin this afternoon, in the Speaker's gallery I'd like to welcome Rachael Furey, daughter of the Premier, and her friend, Mia Critch.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would like to also welcome a new Page here today, Alana Norman. Alana is from St. John's and is studying geology at Memorial University.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Bonavista, Cape St. Francis, Placentia West - Bellevue, Exploits and Ferryland.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Louie Pelley celebrated her 105th birthday on February 1, 2025 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – at the Clarendville Retirement Centre. A remarkable lady who has dedicated her life to family, community and church. Louie was a huge community leader in Harcourt, starting the Girl Guides movement and was always involved in community and regional governance to aid the residents of Harcourt and surrounding areas.

She was an integral member of the Smith Sound waste collection for the region. Louie played the organ in her local church for 80 years –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – and the number of services missed during that time, can be counted on one hand.

On her 104th birthday, CBC national news did coverage of her health and community involvement, resulting in national well wishes and leading to over 1,500 birthday cards being received. At 105 years of age, Louie remains very jovial in her conversations and still loves to sing a few tunes for the many family and friends who visit her. Louie Pelley is a very deserving recipient of the Canadian 75th Anniversary Medal, who certainly made her community a better place to live.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the outstanding contributions of Louie Pelley to her community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, public libraries are more important than ever to the people of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: From early literacy and school readiness, programming for preschoolers, to services for seniors and newcomers, 94 public libraries across our province provide an open, accepting environment supporting literacy and information sessions while also functioning as a community gathering place.

Speaker, I am very proud to say that I have two busy public libraries in my district, one

in the Town of Torbay and one in the Town of Pouch Cove and I have witnessed first-hand the impact that public libraries have on individuals and community. More than a place to simply check out a book, public libraries provide important services to my constituents, such as: digital media, free wired and wireless Internet, storytime, community events and scanning services.

Speaker, I'd like to thank both board chairs Jackie Shannahan from Torbay and Sandra Toomey from Pouch Cove, along with their library staff and volunteer board members, for their continued commitment to the people of my district, to ensuring that our public libraries remain open and providing quality services.

Speaker, I ask my colleagues of this 50th General Assembly to join me in congratulating our public libraries, volunteers and staff in my district and, of course, across our beautiful province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand in this hon. House today to recognize Ms. Sara Thorne of Chance Cove in the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue who joins us in the gallery today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Sara drives the #06 car for Team Thorne Racing, which is a proud father-daughter racing team at the Eastbound International Speedway in Avondale.

Sara started driving in 2014 and though sheer grit, talent and determination has become the youngest woman ever to drive in the NASCAR Pinty's Pro-Line 225.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Last year, she had a top 10 finish in the NASCAR Canada Series, making her the fifth woman to make top 10 in history. If that isn't impressive enough, Sara has won a number of championships and awards including Rookie of the Year in 2014, the Bandolero Championship, TCM Breakout Performer of the Year and the last two years in a row, the TCM Most Popular Driver award, which is an Atlantic Canadian award.

Fearless and focused with the skill honed through rigorous training, Sara has broken barriers, and she inspires a new generation of girls to pursue their passion for speed and competition. Sara drives straight through the glass ceiling.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me in congratulating Sara Thorne of Chance Cove on all her accomplishments to date and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

On March 1, I attended the 105th Anniversary of Kin Canada and the induction of Kin Harry Parsons as a Life Member of Kin Canada at the Botwood Kinsmen Club. Life Membership is the highest award bestowed upon a member.

Harry has been an active member of the club since 1979. In those 46 years, Harry has served in multiple positions such as president, vice president, 2nd vice president, secretary, director and international relations director. He also has chaired a number of committees during his time with the Kinsmen.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Kin Harry Parsons and thank him for his dedicated volunteer service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Brian Harte, a resident of Witless Bay.

Brian has been awarded the highest honour in the Kin Association, Life Member. The Life Membership category recognizes outstanding contributions to Kin. Life Members are greatly respected for their dedication and knowledge within the organization.

Brian joined the Kinsmen Club of Witless Bay at age 19 and has served his community and surrounding areas for over 30 years. His dedication is evident as Brian has given freely of his time since becoming a member. He has held all executive positions at the club level, various positions at the zone level, including the highest role as deputy governor and has recently jumped to the district level at Kin Canada Atlantic.

Over the years, Brian has chaired the annual Santa Claus parade, the Puffin Festival, Community Cleanup, and other fundraising initiatives. Brian's most recent contribution was the Community Pantry, from the development stage, to currently where he monitors the pantry daily to ensure shelves are stocked. This project received national recognition within the Kin Association, including an award called the "Be a Spark" Award.

Please join me in congratulating Brian on this award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

G. BYRNE: Speaker, it's that time again. Big game applications are now open, and this season's management plan is mapped out in the *2025-26 Hunting and Trapping Guide*.

With only minimal quota changes required for the upcoming season, I am very happy to report that current population trends for most game and fur-bearers are indeed stable.

Of special highlight, thanks to the resounding success of the recent Grey Island caribou relocation program we are extending the season in this area.

We are also extending the fall black bear season on the Island of Newfoundland and restructuring black bear management areas to broaden hunter opportunities.

A new trapper's beaver licence will permit trapping in unoccupied traplines but this, Mr. Speaker, will not affect traplines currently assigned to trappers or vacant traplines with wait-lists.

Speaker, wildlife management is a collaborative effort. I am grateful to the many rod and gun clubs, organizations, businesses and volunteers who promote safe and responsible outdoor activities for youth and adults alike.

Their work is vital to the management, conservation and continued enjoyment of our wildlife resources, and it is deeply appreciated.

Along with our essential contribution to food self-sufficiency, hunting and trapping has a tremendous positive impact on mental and physical well-being. The continued importance of traditional outdoor pursuits is a heartening reminder of who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and how much we value our natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, got to get me moose b'y.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, it's great to hear the minister's update regarding the good health of our province's game and fur-bearing species. This is directly the results of the efforts of many stakeholders. Our caucus would like to take a moment to thank the individuals responsible for our continued successful wildlife management.

The minister highlights an increase in food self-sufficiency, which hunting contributes to, this is a crucial matter, particularly in today's environment. That is why we call upon the government to urgently work to facilitate the establishment of a federally regulated slaughterhouse in our province to help boost our food self-sufficiency. This would allow our highly restricted beef producers to bring their products to grocery stores and shelves throughout the province and country.

For our hunters, we are hoping for great weather for all this season. Stay safe and good luck.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Our natural environment is not only beautiful, but it also helps so many in our province relax, recharge, feed themselves and make a living.

We, therefore, think it's unfortunate that many hunters with disabilities face barriers that prevent them from taking advantage of our natural bounty. That's why we call upon government to commit to reviewing the disabled hunters' program to be more inclusive for everyone and finding ways to eliminate many of those barriers that keep a lot of hunters out of the woods.

Thank you so much.

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.

Tariff Trump continues to play a guessing game with tariffs: on-again, off-again. This past week, I know the Premier travelled to a couple of different events and overseas.

I would ask the Premier if could update the House on the province's tariff response package?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, President Trump and his erratic behaviour and irrational theories of economics are undoubtedly going to prove to be a substantial threat to the essence of who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and more broadly as Canadians. It is an existential threat. It's a threat to our values. It's a threat to our province. It's a threat to our country and it's one that this side of the House takes extremely seriously, as I'm sure everyone in this House does.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we have been on this topic since December. I was one of the first to come out to say that it was a threat; it was not a joke. We've been taking it seriously every step of the way, including starting a tariff's table with all leaders across the province and now developing a comprehensive plan, which includes contingency to help those in need, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the Premier is exactly right: this is a serious threat. That's why it is so important for us to have those contingency plans in place. The Minister of Finance has announced a \$200 million contingency fund in Interim Supply. We'd certainly like to see some of the more details around that.

I ask the Premier: Were you able to negotiate any new contracts for Newfoundland and Labrador exports in your recent trips?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we were able to tell the story of Newfoundland and Labrador and what it

means to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador; what it means to invest in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: The mining conference in Toronto had 27,000 participants, one of the largest mining conferences in the world. The message that I delivered to them was, despite the tariffs, Newfoundland and Labrador is open for business. We're the best place to do mining around the world. We welcome mining here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We want to see it grow and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that message was not only received. I am confident that it will turn out to turn into results not just for miners but the communities like Lab West, like Baie Verte, like Springdale: the communities that are supported and that support the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I thank the Premier for his response but, again, I was looking to see if any actual new markets have been identified and any contracts had been signed. I didn't hear that, so I'll move on.

If the Airport Inn was leased with a blank government cheque and is costing taxpayers well over \$150,000 per resident, yet we have over 200 vacant Newfoundland and Labrador housing units which are in various states of disrepair.

So, again, I ask the minister: Why does Government continue to pass over government cheques to their Liberal friends versus keys to the people for new homes?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's an honour and a privilege to fill in for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and Housing.

This is a very important question about how we help people who need help in Newfoundland and Labrador. As we know, we had a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, in the capital city, who were not living in a shelter. Our government took the approach, on Airport Road, as an emergency way to help these individuals who needed a lot of help.

Speaker, I want to stress the wraparound supports that these people are being provided. These people are incredibly challenged to house; we have health care support for them; we have addiction support for them; we have counsellors; there is police support. Really, this is about helping people get back on their feet so that they can be housed independently.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, spending \$49 million – yes, \$49 million – between the lease and the operating costs over three years is exactly what happens when you have to have an emergency plan because you have no plans.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: There has been no plan for housing in this province. They announced 750 and, I think, it was 11 that were actually built. Those are the facts and that's what happens when you don't have strategic plans.

Speaker, this past week we were shocked to learn that the Liberal government has

ordered a \$50 million cut from the Health budget.

I ask the Premier: Why did your government order this cut?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise to speak to this government's record investment in health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Let me be definitively clear, this is not a cut: it is savings. That was part of the transformation that had to occur by combining the health care boards. It was, by the way, not as the Leader of the Opposition has done in the past, it was not on the backs of nurses and shutting down rural clinics. It was not in taking nurses out of the system. It was, in fact, amalgamating middle managers like he had in the past, Mr. Speaker.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again I will continue on with the fact that we all know who ordered those cuts and who approved those cuts; it's the current Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Speaker, the \$50 million that the Premier just alluded to in savings.

I ask the Premier: Can you give us a detailed listing of actually what has been saved and where has it been saved?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take an opportunity to address the preamble: these are not cuts. I'm surprised at the Member opposite, given the fact that

he was a previous finance critic, can't decipher the difference between cuts and savings, Mr. Speaker. That money will be reinvested into the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: – health care system, transforming the health care system: Family Care Teams; a new medical record system –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – virtual care systems. Mr. Speaker, all reinvested into the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: There you go, Mr. Speaker, they want to continue to chirp but we are here delivering results, and we'll continue to deliver.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, there have been lots of announcements including Family Care Teams. How many are actually filled at this particular time? I would argue very little. How many people are still paying to see a nurse practitioner? That's another issue that's been brought to this House.

Speaker, the appraisal tabled last week for Kenmount Crossing land purchase was only for 10 acres of the 54 acres that were actually purchased, and the appraisal was done after the government bought the land.

Again, why did we turn around and issue a blank cheque buying land for which we had no appraisal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, let me take an opportunity to address the preamble, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite continues to want to know what we have done with health care.

The Member opposite was a VP, the Member opposite was an ADM, the Member opposite was in charge of Lab-Grenfell Health. I ask him: What did you do, Sir, to transform health care? I can tell you what we did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Family Care Teams, Mr. Speaker. When I started there were none. There are now 70,000 patients attached to Family Care Teams and will continue to grow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: When I started, there was not access to virtual care, Mr. Speaker. Now we're continuing to keep rural hospitals open with virtual care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm not going to have Members shouting across the floor.

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: We've continued to enhance services, Mr. Speaker, amalgamating the ambulance service so that people receive high quality, consistent care across the province. And this government is just getting started with that 10-year Health Accord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, just so the Premier heard the question, I'll ask it again: The appraisal tabled last week for Kenmount Crossing was only for 10 acres of the 54 acres that were purchased. And again, the appraisal was done after the land had been purchased.

So I ask again: Why did the Premier issue a blank cheque for land with no appraisal done before it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question.

I will take a moment just to clarify and correct the hon. Member. Mr. Speaker, the appraisal was done before the sale of the land in November – it was an MOU – the actual sale of that land was in January.

But, Mr. Speaker, what intrigues me more is here we have a government commitment to build a much-needed acute care hospital, here in the metro region, supported by the surrounding towns, by the two cities and the town. They need this infrastructure; they want this infrastructure. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador need this infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: As well, Mr. Speaker, this development will give great opportunity for road expansion. The people of Paradise will be the first ones to tell you that there is so much congestion there right now. This is also a great project for the roads network on the Northeast Avalon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, this comes down to transparency and accountability for the people's money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's all we've asked about to make sure that we are getting value for the money. There has been nothing to that effect. We were led to believe that there was 10 acres being donated and that was going to take care of it.

Speaker, the appraisal on Snow's Lane says it has residential development possibilities, but we also know the company has strong ties to the Liberal Party. So, again, why do we approve a fireside sale?

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

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

It certainly was not a fireside sale. There was an appraisal done on this property, I think back in 2018. It took from 2018 to 2023 for a sale to actually happen, Mr. Speaker. There was COVID in between, there was an appraisal. The Member opposite has a copy of that appraisal, Mr. Speaker, and it was an independent appraisal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

My question, Minister: What other piece of real estate in this province does the value decrease? How can you pay \$25,000 an acre in the '80s and in 2024, sell it for \$5,000 an acre? Tell me where you can get

real estate that depreciates that much; it's impossible. They do have access to this property, and it is a fire sale and government are not providing the answers; the public deserve to have those answers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: We'll continue asking those questions until we get the answers.

Speaker, it's been eight months since the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital opened. The Liberals had eight years to sign a contract with a radiation oncologist, yet the only signing was the Premier signing a steel beam in 2020.

Can the minister provide an exact date to this House when radiation therapy will be available?

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

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a minute to address the preamble. The Member raised some important issues about how land would depreciate, Mr. Speaker. If he were to read the study, he would see that one of the challenges that happened with that land after the Outer Ring Road intersected that land, Mr. Speaker, it formed a dike, and there was a substantial amount of flooding that happened and water retention. So that land did, according to the independent appraisal, depreciate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Health care is supposed to be the most important question of the day: the topic of the day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: They're getting up and getting on with their rhetoric.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: They're answering preambles, this is the new thing. But I'm going to ask this question again. It needs to be asked.

Why has the Premier only signed the steel beam out in 2020. That's all we know that has been signed out there. How come we can't get a radiation oncologist on staff at that hospital in Corner Brook? When can we expect an exact date, to this House, when radiation therapy will be available?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Radiation services in Western are a priority. We are partly recruited for the staff we require for the new bunker.

Of the 140 new physicians we've hired in the last year or so, unfortunately, a radiation oncologist is not one of them. We're still working on that. Our incentives are the most attractive in Canada and, as far a provision of service is concerned, we're working with cancer care in Eastern to see if we can initiate services in advance of recruiting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

So the people in Corner Brook take a back seat.

Community advocates such as Gerald Parsons and Israel Hann have spoken out noting many promises for cancer care over the years. Unfortunately, NLHS are no longer even providing a time frame to the public for cancer care to be available.

Speaker, government has hired a new cancer staff in St. John's. So, again I repeat, why is Corner Brook continuing to take a back seat?

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

J. HAGGIE: I would argue that health care in Corner Brook is not taking a back seat. They have a really nice, brand new hospital. They have a really nice, brand new long-term care facility and we're working to enhance the old facility to used that for alternate level of care in the interim, as well as other uses.

In terms of radiation oncologists, we have firm in place, we have recruitment incentives, in addition, to the over \$600,000 of signing bonuses for which they would be eligible. Unfortunately, radiation oncologists are in very short supply globally, let alone in Canada.

We continue to work on it, and we're looking at alternative mechanisms to provide that service so we can get started.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Things are going great in Corner Brook. They built the hospital that's too small. They got to use the old hospital to get the overflow. Long-term care is in disaster. They're going to double them up in the Rooms. Everything is wonderful in Corner Brook.

This is the bubble. This is what we've been listening to for years, this Liberal government in this different stratosphere.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: They're not in the same universe that I am.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

AN HON. MEMBER: Question Period.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Yes, we're in the Question Period. You're right. I'm glad you realized that.

Speaker, now that the minister had time to review wait times, can he table an action plan so that the Mobile Crisis Response Team in St. John's region won't miss 10 calls a month?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I mean, between the preamble and the question, that 45 seconds will go extremely quickly.

In terms of the Mobile Crisis Response Team, those individuals, the calls when the team was busy or unavailable because of calls they were already answering, those calls are serviced. They're automatically rerouted to 911. Service is provided; care is provided. Ideally, it would be the Mobile Crisis Response Team; however, when it isn't, there are alternatives.

As for a plan, I suggest he reads the Health Accord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: We've read the Health Accord, that's why we continue to ask questions.

Speaker, these individuals are in a mental health emergency. If we call 911 and there's no response, there'd be a big investigation.

Why is it acceptable to tell individuals with a mental health emergency to call back during regular business hours?

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

J. HAGGIE: These calls are treated as an emergency, Speaker. If Mobile Crisis Response Team is not available, 911 goes. I would argue that is indicative of an emergency response.

There are multiple routes into the mental health care system and the Mobile Crisis Response Team is one of them. Would I like to see it extended and would I like to see it in more locations? The answer to that question is yes. These people are not left with no service. They are treated by competent, caring paramedics.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

In October, the minister told myself and the Trepassey Town Council that they would repair the Trepassey breakwater. Yet, there are times a storm surge is coming, the town is on the hook to clean up the road every time, costing them a fortune.

When will the breakwater be fixed once and for all?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the department is working with the Town of Trepassey on the assessment, on the engineering to have that replaced. Anybody would realize that and I appreciate the Member's concern that that is a major concern, but it's something that is going to take time to be properly repaired and the engineering staff are currently working on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Minister, as you said before, they need the infrastructure and they want the infrastructure and they got to get it done. It's not acceptable. The people of Trepassey are waiting for a date and deserve answers.

When will the breakwater be tendered?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this needs a proper piece of engineering work. That has to be done. This has to be done right. We can't go to Walmart and buy a breakwater, Mr. Speaker. It has to be properly engineered and the department will make sure that when it is properly engineered and ready to go, it will be tendered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, we had an engineer do it before and it fell down, so it's time to get it done.

When will it be done? That's what they're asking.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. CROCKER: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I have a great confidence in the great public servants we have in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: I have confidence, Mr. Speaker, in the engineers that work in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure day in and day out. I have a tremendous amount of confidence in those people, Mr. Speaker. They will engineer it; we will tender it and it will get fixed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Speaker, we all remember in 2019 when the Minister of Transportation awarded his own district an increase of 854 per cent in roadwork funding. The Liberals played politics with payment. Now a shocking ATIPP response shows that the Liberals have awarded their own districts 80 per cent of the firefighting equipment budget.

Are the Liberals playing politics with safety, Mr. Speaker?

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

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the Member's preamble, talking about the investment in my constituency. That was because under the previous administration, there wasn't that investment. And that investment was required. I am not going to stand up here and apologize to the people that I represent or the people around this province that we build roads for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

C. TIBBS: Speaker, every minister in this House works for Newfoundland and Labrador, not their own constituency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: An MHA, proud to be of your district – when you have the privilege of being a minister, you're not supposed to say one thing about your own district. You are the minister for Newfoundland and Labrador, not any particular district.

I'll ask the question once again: Is this government playing politics with firefighting equipment?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I couldn't agree more with the hon. Member across the way on how it's important to invest in fire services. That's what we've done. We've put in some \$4.2 million to \$4.3 million in SCBAs that went across this entire province. Every district, every possible department that needed them, got

them. That's what we did here. If they asked, we funded it. So that's what we did over here.

I've asked the hon. Member and the two people in front of him in Bonavista and Baie Verte - Green Bay if they like the three or four fire trucks they got this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Again, Speaker, this ATIPP shows that from January 2202 to June 2024 there was \$4.8 million of firefighting equipment given out and \$3.8 million of that went to Liberal districts.

I ask again, the SCBAs are one thing, they had to go out, but for this lot of funding, Minister, are you playing politics with the safety?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The public had spoken and there were more Liberals elected than PCs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: That's for sure.

But in all fairness to that, there's a significant amount of infrastructure that's been placed in every district across this province, whether it be SCBAs, which were important because it was a time-sensitive fix that needed to be done or whether it was equipment that goes out to firefighters, to valuable men and women that are working for volunteer firefighters across our province. There have been many investments across our province. There are significant fire truck and equipment

investments that we made in each and every district across this province.

Any time you take a point-in-time number, I can make it look either way, like they can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the funding is 80-20 per cent. The voters did not vote an 80-20 per cent split so that math just does not add up, as usual.

The Premier's district received \$1.5 million alone including a fire tanker, two four-door pumpers and more equipment besides.

Will the Liberals now admit that they favourably awarded more funding of firefighting equipment to their own districts, disregarding the safety of people throughout all the districts which you're responsible for?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the members from the fire commissioner's office who make all these recommendations –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: – because it's based on need. There's a significant amount of money that is given to every district based on their recommendations. I do not call and question the great work that he does and his office does. As well, there's the hon. Member for Bay of Islands that has done significantly well this time as well. All of that has to do with what the need is at the time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, while a core mandate of the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is land-use planning, apparently the department has not had a certified planner on staff for months.

I ask the minister how many town plans or amendments are sitting on his desk waiting for a signature for municipalities?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

On my desk? None.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: I've got to say, Speaker, very disappointing because I know –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

If there are none on his desk, how many are sitting in his department waiting for a signature?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I will take the time as today and I will go and get the number for 2:08 today and get it back to him.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, I look forward to his answer.

Speaker, let me remind the House that municipalities are obligated under provincial legislation to submit town plans and amendments to the department for a signature and some of these town amendments have been sitting in his department for over a year. So the response right now is to tell someone within the municipality to go pay for it at their expense.

I ask the minister will he at least reimburse the towns who have paid certified planners to complete work that should have been done provincially in order to have them processed moving forward? Towns cannot survive without development.

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Municipal planning is a responsibility for both of us. We have provincial legislation and there are requirements for the municipalities. It is incumbent on everybody to get the documentation right. The biggest delay in these amendments is, in actual fact, incomplete, inaccurate documentation or something that needs to be clarified. That is why we have town planners and, unfortunately, that is what slows up the process from time to time.

I am happy to work with the department and with municipalities – and have actually done – to try and introduce a lean approach to speed this up because certainly in terms of housing, we need to get this faster.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, people have seen their power bills increase significantly. One constituent of mine who heats their home and hot water with oil and only uses electricity for her fridge, stove and lights, has seen her bill tripled. Others are sitting in the dark lighting candles and piling on blankets to keep warm, and choosing between food, their mortgage or their electric bill.

I ask the Minister of Finance has she asked Newfoundland Power not to cut electricity to families and individuals unable to afford the exorbitant power bills?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member for what is a very important question, especially this time of year.

So just three points I'll make at this time. The first part is that I do believe Newfoundland Power has a policy whereby they do not cut power during this time of year.

Number two, after having a chat with Newfoundland Power today about this very same concern, I've instructed anybody who is hearing this from their constituents to feel free to contact Newfoundland Power to have a specific look at their situation to make sure that the metre is working right, that the reading is done, or maybe sometimes it requires an explanation as to how the bill is working.

The last part I will say is that we continue to do what we can. In fact, we've had further

conversations on the \$240 million last year that we put into rate mitigation to make sure we have the lowest rates in Atlantic Canada, something this government will continue to do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, even with rate mitigation, people's power bills continue to increase by 2.5 per cent because of Muskrat Falls, in addition to the rate increase being sought for by Newfoundland Power. Removing the provincial portion of the HST from all forms of home heating, something that has been done before, would go a long way to help people struggling to heat their homes. Despite our calls to do just that, the Minister of Finance has been incredibly reluctant to do so.

So I ask the minister what will she do to prevent people from descending into energy poverty?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Look, we recognize how difficult cost of living is. That's why this government has invested \$750 million and put it back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – \$750 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Specifically, we do have a home heat rebate. That is for those people who heat their homes with oil.

As my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, has said, we also

are mitigating the rates of electricity because of Muskrat Falls, Speaker. We're going to continue to do everything that we can to make the cost of living lower and do more to help the people of this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's clear to the people of Labrador West that this government is blind to our realities. Landlords have evicted residents to get higher rents from fly-in, fly-out workers. Last week, the minister downplayed the urgency of the housing shortage in my district. We have zero per cent vacancy. Government refuses to protect renters with strong rent control measures.

Why does this government continue to side with landlords by refusing to implement rent control to stop these things from happening?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a good question and one that has garnered a lot of conversation in the department recently. I know the Member even brought up in terms of rent control, rent freeze and the Member will agree that there is a housing challenge in this province. I've always said that there has to be a balanced lens in terms of looking at it from the tenant's perspective – we're always looking for ways to help tenants – and then there are the landlords and then there's the investment in more housing. There has to be a balanced approach. That's the lens that we're looking through and we'll continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Intended on taking action to create more housing for Labrador West, this government keeps passing the buck to the federal government. Since 2018, the feds have turned down multiple projects in Labrador West. Last week, the minister proved once again that Labradorians are not – not a single point of the Liberal five-point plan helps them find housing.

So I ask the minister: When will this province take action, take responsibility and stop passing the buck to the federal government and get those 40 units built?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

We're still working with the federal government on the 40 units, but I'm very pleased to tell this House and the Member that, just last week, we awarded a tender of four new units being constructed in Lab West. We are working on the 40.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Last week, several schools were targeted by far-right protestors placing the safety of students and teachers at risk.

I ask the Minister of Education what measures she will put in place to prevent such invasions of schools from taking place in future?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad, but not glad to have the opportunity to respond because, in this day and age, I can't believe we have to stand and talk about these types of things happening in our schools. It's very unfortunate.

We're aware of several occurrences over the past few weeks where schools and teachers have been targeted with harassment and violence, and I would like to unequivocally state that we stand with our teachers in that schools are a safe place –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: – they have to be places of higher learning, of higher education and our students and our staff have to feel safe when they are there.

We do have legislation that protects those grounds from any form of protest, not inhibiting anybody's right to protest at all, but ensuring that it is a safe distance away from our schools so that learning can take place and our staff and students can feel safe.

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 Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

With leave of the House, I would like to table *Out-of-Control Rents: Rental wages in Canada, 2023*, by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, describing the renting situation in this province.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 8, Bill 108.

SPEAKER: Further notice of motions?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Provincial Health Authority Act, Bill 109.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further notice of motions?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that this will be the private Member's resolution that we will introduce for debate on Wednesday, March 12. It's moved by myself and seconded by the MHA for Conception Bay South.

WHEREAS the Seniors' Advocate in her report titled, *Long May Your Big Jib Draw: Setting Sail*, as released in September 2019, recommended that the shingles vaccine be offered free of charge to low-income seniors and others with compromised immune systems; and

WHEREAS in the same report, the Seniors' Advocate wrote: "Seniors recognize that shingles is a debilitating disease that can cause much suffering as well as increased costs to the health care system. Most health care plans do not cover this cost including the pharmaceutical care plan. Many seniors report that the cost is up to \$300 for the two inoculations; many cannot afford this cost"; and

WHEREAS the Seniors' Advocate has continued advocating for the coverage of the shingles vaccine; and

WHEREAS the Seniors' Advocate's 2025-2026 prebudget submission recommends that the upcoming budget include funding to provide the shingles vaccine free of charge to seniors living in low income and others with compromised immune systems;

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to provide the shingles vaccine free of charge to seniors and individuals with compromised immune systems.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

That motion that was just read in will be our private Member's resolution being debated this coming Wednesday afternoon.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Are there any further notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2016 the government cut the number of home care hours for seniors and increased the contribution they would have to pay to obtain and maintain home care workers.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the amount of hours for seniors' care at the previous lower rate so as to ensure seniors remain in their homes for longer periods of time.

Speaker, I've brought this petition to the floor many a time. It's been proven that seniors are more happy, healthier in their own homes with care that can keep them there for longer periods of time. So they need more hours in their own homes so that they can stay there. It's where they belong and they're healthier, rather than be out in the hospitals where they are.

Speaker, I'm hearing stories now actually that they can't even get home care hours. They can't get the hours. There are not enough workers there for the seniors to obtain the hours that they need to help them through. So even the hours now are being

jeopardized by the workers in the system so that they can't get their hours. This is certainly not helping our seniors.

Government is planning to implement a care to community initiative to keep people out of the acute-care beds and keep them in their own homes. How do they expect to do that when they can't even get the home care hours, can't get the workers to support the seniors in our province?

Not good enough, Speaker. We'd like to see the minister get up and give us an explanation for that, Minister.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts, which came into effect in January 2025 eliminated the ability of those municipalities to operate on poll tax by mandating real property tax – section 117. It is the desire of the residents of King's Cove to maintain the ability to provide services, as they always have, using poll tax as opposed to property tax.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow municipalities, such as King's Cove, permission to continue with the utilization of poll tax to meet their communities needs.

I can't speak, Mr. Speaker, to say that we've got 100 per cent of the residents in King's Cove, but one thing I can say that's factual is that surely we're not far off from everyone's desire to maintain the poll tax. The irony is that this new bill that came forth, this bill came in under the spirit of giving municipalities more autonomy, more freedom to make the decisions without having to access the minister for approval in many domains.

This is one here that we've got community that's being dictated to that they must abort poll tax, one that they've utilized since their conception as a town. The initial assessment that's going to occur in this municipality is going to charge every household \$86 to have the assessment done – \$86 to have the assessment done to determine what tax that they're going to charge. That frightens a lot of residents in rural Newfoundland and in King's Cove.

The minister spoke shortly a little while ago and addressed the question related about the cost of living in rural Newfoundland. Well, here's an initiative where you can keep money in rural Newfoundland, like in the municipality of King's Cove, like in the municipality of Musgravetown, like in the municipality of George's Brook-Milton. Keep their \$86 per household there and allow them to continue on with the poll tax that has worked for them.

The latest statement of financial position for the Crown corporation that's going to collect the property tax shows that they are very healthy. There's nothing wrong with a healthy Crown corporation, but if you're going to pull out more money from these areas than they wish to maintain poll tax, which was what was working for them, allow them to do it. Allow them to keep more money in rural Newfoundland and allow them to use the poll tax.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The section of road between Bay Bulls and St. John's city limits is in need of major repairs and forms a piece in the Irish Loop road highway system. This is the main thoroughfare for many residents who commute to work every day to St. John's and Mount Pearl from the Southern Shore.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic in the area.

Speaker, I spoke on this before. Certainly when you have a storm, the road where you drive from Bay Bulls to the city limits is really grooved when you're driving. If you can remember the Outer Ring a few years back, when you get in the grooves of the roads where your tires are, it's really grooved from Bay Bulls to the city limits.

When a plow goes over it, the plow, during a storm, is only hitting the center of the road, not getting down into where the grooves are to be able to clean the road. So when people are driving, as a safety aspect, they're trying to ride between the center of the road on one side and the yellow line, to stay out of those grooves. When they meet a truck or they meet another vehicle or a highway vehicle, they're trying to haul back into the slush, haul back into the snow and it's a very dangerous situation, and it's going on for a long time.

Only this weekend I noticed on the bridge in Bay Bulls itself, the pavement is coming off the bridge where it's attached to the concrete and probably 100, 200 feet away, there are all kinds of pieces of pavement that are coming up out of the main road. This is the main thoroughfare for all the residents of the Southern Shore driving to go to St. John's and Mount Pearl. It's very dangerous.

Only again last night, you hit these, where the pavement is totally gone, the size of the

top of your desk here and it's really dangerous. I mean you're trying to avoid that and in the nighttime there's no avoiding it. You just can't avoid it. You don't know it's there; you meet a car and you just have to hit it.

In the area where I live and right along the Irish Loop, the tourism that comes in there, the East Coast Trails are there, boat tours, lighthouse picnics, the archeological dig up in Portugal Cove and ATV trails are becoming a big attraction there as well. So all people coming into the district, driving on these roads and it is not a safe road.

So, hopefully, this government will be able to look at it in their budget and get this stretch of road repaired.

Thank you, Speaker.

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 5.

I move that the House now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 102, which is in progress, and that is seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 102.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Trimper): Order, please!

Welcome back to the Committee of the Whole and Bill 102.

We are now considering, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Law Enforcement Oversight Commission and the Complaints Process Relating to Law Enforcement Officers.

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

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CLERK: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

You get one of those a day.

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

I always appreciate that and it's good.

I'm happy to ask a couple of questions here in Committee on Bill 102 and I've enjoyed the debate so far. I do have a couple of questions with respect to Part II. Minister, I will go to 14.(1)(b). It says: "Where a complaint is referred to the chief for investigation under subsection 9(3), the chief shall ... (b) appoint a law enforcement officer to investigate the complaint."

So the question I have is: Does this mean that the complaint being investigated, including the officer, is that done by a colleague or is that complaint being investigated by an out-of-province officer? Because it doesn't say in the legislation and I just want clarity on that.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A very good question. Thank you for the opportunity to clarify.

As we've said before, the complaints will come in to one window, through the commissioner. The commissioner will determine whether it's of public interest. Meaning it could be something that the public would need to know or ought to know, or a HR-related matter. It could be as not shining their boots or not putting the right badges on the right way or whatnot or showing up late to work. So that would be an internal matter and it would be investigated by a supervisor that would be within the RNC.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Continuing on with 14(8)(c). It says: "The chief shall review the report referred to in subsection (3) and do one of the following ... (c) where the complaint is a complaint as to the policies or procedures of the law enforcement agency, amend the policies or procedures."

That had me to thinking, Minister, with respect to total discretion. This new legislation is supposed to avoid any possible preference given, from what I'm reading. I'm just wondering with respect to the Oversight Commission, how many people are there? Are there any civilians on that with respect to the composition?

Because commission applies to more than one person. Unless it's been answered previously and I missed it, Minister, if you would.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we delved into it a little bit before, but fair enough, there's been a lot of banter back and forth, or good questions back and forth.

As I said before, obviously the advertisement for the commissioner hasn't gone out because the legislation isn't passed. When that goes out, the advertisement for the commissioner would come forward. The commissioner would investigate those things through an investigative group of people that they would hire based on the need and requirement that they see going forward, but that has not been thought of in the legislation as of yet because we don't know the number of staff, I should say.

We know there's going to staff; we just don't know the number of staff yet because we have to put the commissioner in place and then they would put their staff around them to ensure that they can do a fulsome review on things that would come into their purview.

I'll stop there just in case there's a follow-up based on what I've said.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

Just from that, so will that require then an amendment to this current legislation at that time, when the commissioner reviews what is needed and for a number of staff, as you

said, will that be then another amendment to this legislation at the time?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

No, that would be picked up in regulations. When we do the regulation development, that will be done in consultation with those key stakeholders I've listed a few times before. The treetops of that would be First Voice, as an example, the Department of Justice, obviously, the Department of Health, the RNCA, the association for the workers at the RNC, the executive of the RNC themselves, some other jurisdictions' regulations that we'd bring forward to look at the best options for us with this particular piece of legislation.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

That's all I had for now. Most of my questions were asked by other colleagues. Those are the ones I had, so thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

It's an honour again to speak to this bill, Bill 102, it would enact the *Law Enforcement Oversight Commission Act*.

It is a very important piece of legislation, Chair. Last week, we spoke about it in quite some detail. I had the opportunity to ask many questions of the Minister of Justice regarding some of the decisions that were

made in implementing Bill 102 and the creation of this important bill. I still have some things that I'd like to address that I feel need to be repeated and perhaps further explored with respect to this bill.

Again, just for the benefit of individuals who perhaps are weighing in on this for the first time, we need to acknowledge the importance of policing in our society today, especially today with the many complex crimes that we see in our society; the rise of illicit drug trade in our towns and communities. So it's very important that we give this bill the necessary attention that it needs.

We do not dispute – and we acknowledge – that police work is extremely important work. It can be difficult and dangerous in many circumstances. I think what we need to examine here is the role of public trust and accountability that's at play when we look at this important piece of legislation. Because we know from past experience, when public trust is eroded, then the job of our police officers becomes even that much more difficult.

So I think we need to look at the pieces that are involved in this legislation again. We know that it focuses on police discipline. We know that the focus is narrow with respect to complaints that are made to the police force with respect to the behaviour and potential misconduct and illegal behaviour of police officers. So this is a very important piece of legislation because it looks at the process that is in place for the public to lay a complaint against a police officer.

Now we do know in the past that our disciplinary process has been completely inadequate. It's been convoluted, it was complex, it lacks independence, it can be described as secretive, many delays, allegations of conflict of interest between the position of the chief of police and the role that the chief has to play in the disciplinary process. So there have been so many issues that we have seen with our

disciplinary process and I am pleased to see that the government and the Department of Justice are at least focusing on that piece with respect to the police force and the issues that are at play.

So that is good and we in the Official Opposition are not saying that we disagree with that. We think that is absolutely necessary and long overdue, and we are so thankful to see that the Minister of Justice is addressing that important piece. So there's no question about that, to be clear.

But public trust in our law enforcement agencies goes further than that. It's not just about the police discipline and the mechanisms that are in place, we need to look at public trust and the level of face that our citizens have in the way that law enforcement agency investigates wrongdoing. But also when we look at public trust, we're looking at a piece as to whether law enforcement agencies are they ever really capable of investigating themselves? We've heard the question asked forever: Can police investigate police? Can they investigate themselves? That is what has been so important to us here, as a PC Opposition, is the importance of a civilian oversight board, not just a sole commissioner.

Now the minister and I went back and forth about that point to great lengths last week, but what we're saying is that Newfoundland and Labrador has been really, virtually, the only province in the country that has not had and does not have a police oversight board.

When I talk about that I need to make sure that's clear, because we're talking about civilians on the board. That's what we're talking about. It's our position that civilians should be given more responsibility and more authority and more involvement in overseeing policing. Why? Because police cannot investigate the police; they cannot investigate themselves.

The concern with just having a sole commissioner is that it doesn't meet that level of civilian representation that we need. I think that point needed to be clarified because perhaps it kind of got lost last week in the discussions and in the questions.

Because without the trust of the public, the police cannot police our society. How best do we get to that level of trust and accountability by the police is by ensuring that civilians have a greater role, as they do in other jurisdictions in our country where we see police oversight boards are the norm, if I may say so. They are the norm and that has been the concern of the Opposition: Why didn't we go far enough? Why didn't we do that? A golden opportunity lost. That's my argument. There's a golden opportunity and I do not understand why this government couldn't just take it and run with it, instead of just being so narrow, so focused, in this piece of legislation, Bill 102.

So on that note, I do want it to be clear that we do support the narrow scope of this legislation, no issue there, but it doesn't go far enough. That's the short-sightedness, if you will, of the government and specifically the Department of Justice in not taking it further. A police oversight board is important, it sets training requirements. It defines standards. It even can go and set high levels of police, recruitment standards, yet we in Newfoundland and Labrador one of the last jurisdictions without a police oversight board.

What is civilian oversight about? Again, is about being accountable to the public, which means more transparency and it means an overall better police force for everyone in our province.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think I gleaned a question or two maybe in there.

For the benefit of everybody in the House, I'll take a couple of seconds and highlight a couple of little things. There is significant oversight that has changed over the past number of years. We don't have to look any further than SIRT. As an example for what the hon. Member talked about, police investigating police, that's not the case for criminal crimes that have been committed.

The RNC Public Complaints Commission that exists today, I think she did a very good job of highlighting what the issues with that piece of legislation was. That's why we wanted to get at that right away.

But from my standpoint, I'm thankful that everyone on the other side has said this is a very good piece of legislation, albeit they want it to go further. All I can say is stay tuned on that to see what comes next out of the next piece of legislation that will come forward to help with respect to policing.

There was a significant amount of training that was talked about over the last couple of sessions in the House of Assembly. In 2003 to 2024, there were 4,000 courses completed with the RNC. Just to let you know that they're a very trained. There were over 4,000 courses that were completed, in combination with the RNC and the RCMP. They offer many of those things in tandem and offer seats to each other, which has been fantastic.

I look forward to this moving forward and getting everyone in this House of Assembly to support this very, good piece of legislation that has been highlighted for the last, maybe, four days.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Along the same lines as my two colleagues have talked about, the Member for Harbour Main talked about the commission and the proper oversight there and the Member for Cape St. Francis mentioned a particular clause in terms of the police chief. I think it was clause 14.(1)(b). Essentially it said, "Where a complaint is referred to the chief for investigation under subsection 9(3), the chief shall" ... (b) "appoint a law enforcement officer to investigate the complaint."

Of course, I go to the definition section, section 2 of this bill and "law enforcement officer' means a police officer as defined in the *Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Act, 1992.*" When I go to that act, we get the definition of a police officer, which "means the chief and every commissioned and non-commissioned officer and every recruit of the constabulary"

My concern here, as my colleague's, is we, essentially, have a Constabulary officer or officer investigating another Constabulary officer. In terms of trying to come up with an unbiased, or at least the appearance of an unbiased decision, I would think that we would want someone outside of the Constabulary to investigate and oversee complaints that come in.

Now, I understand there may be different types of complaints and levels of complaints but when I read through this, it is essentially saying the police are investigating the police.

So what I'm looking for is, what's your comment on this in terms of ensuring unbiased in the process for dealing with these complaints?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A very, very good question.

So section 14 relates directly to internal HR matters in the RNC. Remember when we talked about the separation that the civilian oversight commissioner determines which way an investigation will go, whether it's an internal matter or an external matter, that's of public interest. This is an internal matter we're discussing here in 14, in that section that you're talking about.

So this would be an internal matter that the chief would be investigating that is HR related. As an example, police officer not showing up to work on time. That would be a complaint that could be lodged. That would be an internal matter that the chief would take to the supervisor of that individual to investigate that to see if that is a valid complaint and then, obviously, that supervisor would take the corrective action for that particular RNC officer if they were showing up late.

I hope that answers your question.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Yes and no, and I mentioned earlier because there could be levels of complaints and, as I said in my earlier question, some may be able to go to a police officer. If it is an HR issue, there are different levels of HR issues but it still comes back. Given the seriousness of some of those complaints that could come in, you still have a police officer investigating a police officer. Regardless of how you look at it, it's still police on police. Yes, you could have a HR issue that's simply someone is not showing up on shift on time, that's a little different than something that's more, I guess, egregious.

When I look at it, you could still potentially have for a very serious HR complaint, a police officer overseeing and investigating another police officer.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Serious complaints would be dictated by the complaint itself, being evaluated by the civilian commissioner. If it's serious and of public interest, which most if not all serious complaints would be, 13.(1)(b) is about the commissioner's investigation; 14 deals the complaint being a HR internal matter that the commissioner would have already done an investigation on to say, okay, this is not in the interest of the public; this is an internal HR matter, as I gave the example of showing up to work late, not wearing the correct boots. Things that would be problematic from a HR perspective and it is deemed no impact to the public. That would be the only ones that would go to the chief.

So that would be an internal matter. Then the chief would send it to a supervisor of that particular unit as an example. It's hard to speak in what-ifs, but if it is a HR matter by its very nature, it's not going to impact the public, it's not going to be external to the RNC, so it would be handled by a supervisor of that individual or maybe even someone on the executive team, depending on what it is.

I think what's happening here is you're thinking that two of the things are conflated; they're not. This is one aspect that's HR related for the chief; the supervisor will handle that or an RNC executive member would handle that investigation into that particular officer's behaviour, as an example, with respect to showing up late, as an example. Or if you want to delve into the separate issue which is the commissioner, which they would be looking at the civilian oversight, making sure if it's public interest

or has an impact on the public, it will deal with that directly.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I guess it all comes down to clarity and, to be quite honest with you, I'm struggling with that here, because when I looked at that section, you go further on in that section under section 8, I mentioned this the last time, the chief shall have the ability to dismiss the complaint. I just looked at it, you still have an individual who decides whether the complaint goes forward or not; you have police on police. I understand you're saying it's HR and that, but it's still an important piece when it comes to the operation of your RNC, ensuring that all matters are looked as independently as they can.

So I don't have a question, it's just a comment that it's not as clear to me and it doesn't give me the level of confidence that there would be some independence in dealing with those issues.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll end by simply just saying that all complaints go to the civilian commissioner.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Thanks, Chair.

This came to my attention last week. In my district, we don't have RNC, we have RCMP, but I still had to engage RCMP recently with regard to reporting to municipal leadership on a specific issue. So I was looking for reporting and engagement with municipal authorities. That brought me

to page 22, item 30: the commissioner shall publish a de-identified summary of the decision on the commission's website. So folks on the civilian side would have to go and actually look for that report. Then in 3: the commissioner shall report to the minister annually. Like I said, I think it's important for the police force, that engagement with civil society.

So I ask the minister: How do you envision either the formal or informal reporting relationship between the police commissioner and municipal authorities?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'll say that the RCMP do a similar thing as what we're talking about here. So you highlighted that very well.

Any organization or any individual now, based on involvement with someone that may or may not want to be proposing a complaint, this legislation is going to allow people that may have a fear of making that complaint to have another party help them with that. That could be a municipal agency, as you highlighted. There will be a circle back.

One of the good things about this piece of legislation in relation to the last piece of legislation that we're talking about replacing here now is that there are no discernable time frames. Right now, it's a circle back every 45 days with those involved to ensure that they're going through and there's a finite time level, six months. They can ask for another six-month extension but that's where it ends.

The good thing about the circle back piece is that people are kept abreast of what's happening every month and a half in their file, which is a problem that the hon. Member for Harbour Main highlighted in her previous chat today, as a problem with the

previous legislation. So we're trying to fix that.

This is not the be-all and end-all piece of legislation to fix every problem with respect to oversight of police but this is one thing that's going to really help with the public confidence in the disciplinary process.

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

L. PADDOCK: Just a final observation. I know my colleague from Terra Nova highlighted last week with regard to military police. Military police does have a civilian oversight board. That was brought in. There were challenges with it, but it was brought in and is now very effective. I would, I guess, petition government to look at that, as we look to continue to advance this process to improve upon it and expand it, to look specifically what was done with the military police. That's all.

CHAIR: Back to the hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

I do have a further question that has arisen from the questions of my colleague from Cape St. Francis and from Topsail – Paradise, that has specifically to do with section 14, with respect to where complaints are referred to the chief for investigation.

Now, hopefully, we learn from mistakes of the past. When I first was elected in 2019, I believe it was shortly after that, we did see that there were some troubling things that had occurred during the tenure of the previous chief of police with respect to complaints that had been initiated, and that brings me to this particular section because, first of all, we know that it's very important that we have transparency and accountability. It is so important for us to have processes in place that ensure impartial and unbiased processes that will –

that's a big proponent of transparency and accountability.

But when we have, as we see in section 14, a person who has the authority to, in essence, arbitrarily choose investigators in a complaint. We saw from problems in the past, years ago, what can happen when we do not have impartial and objective investigators that are hired to conduct internal investigations. We saw what happened years ago as a result of that. So we have to learn from our mistakes in the past.

That brings me to the questions that were asked by my two colleagues about section 14. Is this troubling to the minister that the police chief is still going to have such really arbitrary powers when it comes to the hiring of investigators of different complaints that may come before him or her? That, I would argue, is not transparent; that could be perceived as biased.

I want to know if the minister has concerns, because that is the root of questions that come from the Member for Cape St. Francis and Topsail - Paradise.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we're conflating two very different issues here. We've talked about serious complaints that have occurred in the past under a previous administration and/or previous chief and we're conflating them with HR-related matters. I think one of the major issues that I can see doing that is that one of the things that we've changed over the last number of years is that serious complaints of a criminal nature go to SIRT. It was an organization, civilian-led that investigates police officers who have done something criminal in nature. That's where that is to.

What we're talking about in this bill, the *Law Enforcement Oversight Commission Act*, is to ensure that the public complaints get to go in through a one-window, civilian-led commissioner that will divide up the information into two separate areas; one of public interest, which is serious matters that are not criminal, and the other is internal HR matters that would be similar to a police officer habitually showing up – or not even habitually, because that's the wrong word, showing up late for work and getting a complaint about that.

We can't conflate the two issues together because they're not the same. We're not asking the chief. Once the independent, civilian-led commissioner says that that's an internal HR matter, with no public interest tied to the specific issue, then it would go to the chief of police and the chief of police will take that internal matter, HR-related – the example I used earlier was being late – and then that chief of police, whoever he or she may be in the future, can direct a supervisor who would handle the department of individuals showing up for work on time, to look at that and say if this is a regular occurrence for this individual, if corrective action needs to be taken, that will be done on an internal matter.

Let me be very clear, that the civilian-led commissioner of this piece of legislation we're talking about will look at the serious matters and if those are HR matters that are habitually happening, that the internalness of that complaint will be taken away. It will be done by the commissioner, but these are one-off things that may come up periodically that are HR related.

That is what I'd like to say from that perspective, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 40 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 40 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The clauses have carried.

On motion, clauses 2 though 40 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The title is carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 102 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I need a seconder.

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

CHAIR: Justice and Public Safety?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

All those in favour of the Committee rising and reporting Bill 102 carried without amendment, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have reviewed Bill 102, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Law Enforcement Oversight Commission and the Complaints Process Relating to Law Enforcement Officers and have directed me to report that we have carried that bill without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and direct him to report that Bill 102 has been carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

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

pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 on Monday, March 10, 2025.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2025.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 13, second reading of An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7, Bill 106, and that is seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

We are now debating Bill 106.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a pleasure to get up here any time and speak on behalf of the residents of Topsail - Paradise.

Just to remind everyone what the bill is about, this bill would amend the *Revenue Administration Act* to extend the reduction of the tax on certain grades of gasoline by seven cents per litre until March 31, 2026. I don't think anyone in this House would be against lowering taxes, because we go through a lot day to day in terms of cost of living. You will get support over here, but we can go a little further.

If you look up or google gas tax or the price of gas going up, one of the first lines you will get is raising of price of gas affects the Consumer Price Index. It actually raises the Consumer Price Index. The Consumer Price Index, as we all know, is a statistical basket of goods that Stats Canada looks at and uses the prices of those goods and services to determine where inflation is going and what affordability is for residents of this province.

We all know that affordability, along with health care and some violence in our communities, we know those are top of mind for a lot of individuals here. So when you look at the price of gas and any taxes on it, logistics of operating a business, transportation of goods is affected. Consumers feel the pinch right away, because those costs are transported onto the goods and services they receive. So it has an almost immediate affect on consumers, and consumers will end up buying less.

But you will have some out there, depending on the cost of gas and that, who

will not be able to buy. Even less, they won't be able to buy. Some of those, when you see the price of gas go up, which affects the Consumer Price Index, you see individuals who make very troubling decisions on a daily basis. They have to decide do I do this or do I do that. And what really happens is those on the lowest incomes or on fixed incomes tend to be the most disproportionately affected by the price of gas and the price of goods and services.

Some of us will look at it can say, seven cents? Not maybe a big issue, but it is. It is a tremendous issue when it comes to those like seniors. Seniors who are living on a fixed income. Seniors who are trying to heat their houses. Seniors are trying to put food on the table. Seniors who don't know if they can afford their medications and make the decision to either not fill a prescription or to start diluting it or breaking it up.

Again, that all comes about as affected by the price of gas, believe it or not, it's affected by the price of gas because all these goods and services and prescriptions have to be transported, have to be made. The price of gas has a huge impact on that.

Of course, in this particular day and age, where we have this fellow down South who's playing a shell game on a regular basis, wondering if we're going to see tariffs or not and to what extent. I mean, that puts even greater anxiety on us. We're talking about the movement of goods from one country to the next and that all has to be transported. You can't do like Star Trek and beam it over there, it doesn't happen; it has to be transported.

It even affects housing. Those out there, young people who want to buy a house, those who have no house, those looking for shelter, lumber, nails, building supplies, all have to be transported from A to B. All these vehicles have to have some form of fuel put in them.

When you're driving hundreds of kilometers, it all starts to add up, because when you look at a tank of gas and if we say it's around 50 to 65 litres, it adds up. Seven cents is about \$5 on a tank of gas. We'll turn around and say, well, what's \$5? Some of us can say that, but to the person out there who doesn't have it, it's a big thing.

Think about our child care. Child care operators have to provide nutritious lunches and snack foods for kids in that establishment for \$5. That's what they have to do.

We have school lunch programs out there, because there are families who don't have the time and some who don't have the money to feed their children. So charges of seven cents on a tank of gasoline and \$5 makes a huge difference to a lot of people out there.

You talk about the Consumer Price Index, you can go into Stats Canada and the latest report will tell you that the Consumer Price Index is gone up again – gone up again.

I rely on Stats Canada; I would call them a reputable provider of stats. They do a labour force survey every month that's put out. Believe it or not, it affects employment because there are individuals out there who can't afford a car nor can they afford the gas to have it. They have to find ways to and from work. So it affects them.

When you talk about health care, and I touched on it with seniors and prescriptions, what we have is people waiting months and months and months to get a test of some sort, MRI, CAT scan and the list goes on. I've had seniors reach out to me who have been on a wait-list here in the city for months and months. They've been told, well, if you can get to Carbonear, you can get that done quicker, or get to another location, you can get that done quicker. I've had seniors in tears saying, we can't afford it. We can't afford to get in our car and drive to that appointment. Think about it.

Now others have been able to say, not a problem, and go. But when you're filling up your car on a regular basis, it starts to add up.

Now you might notice out in my parking space you don't see that old 16-year-old Jeep that I was driving for many years. Standard Jeep, nothing electric on it, roll-down windows and all that. Loved my Jeep. Now, it was getting to the point where the feet were going out through the bottom and it was like a Flintstone vehicle, but I loved my Jeep and I get attached to my Jeep – this will be relevant – until my daughter said: Dad, you can't be driving around in a 16-year-old Jeep.

Before Christmas I looked around, not a brand-new Jeep, but I got another Jeep, not 16-years old. But do you know what I found myself doing? No lie, because it got all these bells and whistles on it, but it has this chart or this graph that tells you what your miles per gallon is or how many kilometres you get per 100 and, because of the price of gas, I have that screen up there all the time now. It's like I'm playing a game, trying to get the lowest score to see how much I can get on a tank of gas.

Can I afford a tank of gas? Sure. But think about someone who is in real dire straits. I mean, they don't know if they could put – I'll go to the gas station and I'll top it up to the top. I've seen people in front of me in the line \$5 in gas or \$7.26 of gas. They're putting in what they can afford and sometimes they can't afford.

So when I look at any move, any legislation that helps to take the burden off our consumers, our residents, it's a good thing. There is no doubt about it. But I guess – I was going to say like Trump; no one is like Trump, that's a different topic altogether, but when you look at it, residents and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians alike in this uncertain world, we look for something that's more certain, something we can count

on, something we know, okay, we're not waiting.

Next year, we know what the tax is going to be on a litre of gas and that's part of what we're advocating for. This is a great thing, reduce the tax off the gas, but we'd like to see it done on a permanent basis as a measure to try and ensure that our residents are able to budget better, those who are really on tight budgets and really can't afford one thing from one day to the next.

You need to have some certainty there because, at the end of the day, when you don't have certainty, it actually becomes more expenses for us as a whole, as a society. Again, I go back, you think of the senior who is rationing their medications because of the cost of getting those medications, of which the price of gas is built in. You think of those people doing that. There's a greater probability they're going to go ill, a greater probability they're going to have to be transported to the hospital, a greater expense on our community so there's always a domino effect.

It all comes back to what I started off with when we looked at the Consumer Price Index. As I said, if you google what's the effect of higher gas prices, the first thing on most of those lists is that it raises the cost of living; it raises the Consumer Price Index. We can talk about multiple explanations of that.

It's too bad, I probably should have looked it up, but that basket of goods, if you look at it, it has pretty basic, everyday needs in that basket of goods that Stats Canada utilizes to determine the effect on the community.

There's another area I heard about, and I mentioned it earlier about medical transportation and those who can drive to a spot. I stand to be corrected on this but this is coming from a resident – actually, not my resident but someone else, but they

happened to contact me on it, talking about, for example, the MTAP program. I stand to be corrected and the minister can get up and correct me on this, but my understanding is that they put in a claim for reimbursement of any fees they've spent. I did have a conversation with one senior – it was a couple – getting his wife to treatment with MTAP, but he didn't know if he could afford the initial amount to get to where he had to be with his wife.

It's maybe something we should be looking at. I'll throw that out there; it's probably something we should look at with that program in terms of some advance payment or some quicker reimbursement. He was concerned about having enough gas in the vehicle and that to go to where he had to go. It really plays hard on individuals.

On the other end of the spectrum, forget the seniors and go to the other end, and I mentioned briefly on that when we're talking about child care and I heard of some of the private transportation that parents used to get their kids from school to child care and back. These companies have to operate so seven cents, 10 cents, any fuel charges affects them. I heard from parents who saw their rates go up. Now, we can argue whether the rates went up too much or not enough but the fact is, the operator, because of the cost of gas, has to raise the rates.

You can't be driving around with wear and tear on your vehicle and just breaking even. Because if you're transporting children, in this particular case, you certainly need to have reliable vehicles, but the cost of gas, the cost of fuel affects that and parents end up paying. I mean, they're paying for a service but it increases the cost for them. We're in a province certainly that could need more kids. We need more kids here in the province, more children and more young families.

I grew up in a time where we had one vehicle. Now, myself and my three brothers

and my three sisters, we actually used to go around in the small orange van, like a school bus, but it was one vehicle. Then we see families now, you'll have two, three, four cars in the driveway. Everyone has a vehicle. But what you're seeing is a lot of those vehicles are sitting and most people jump in the cheaper vehicle to go.

In fact, one thing my kids still scream at me about is, we kept my wife's old 2011 Toyota – we both have vehicles but we got this old 2011 Toyota that sits up in the driveway. I go off in that now and then because I can get from here to Port aux Basques and back in that on a tank of gas, whereas this other vehicle I got, I might make it to the Overpass. It's a lot cheaper, but I take it because it is cheaper.

Again, I'm not struggling every day, but this seven cents is huge for some families now – it's huge – and it's huge for businesses and retail outlets who have to bring in goods and put them on the shelf. To eliminate that is, without a doubt, a step in the right direction. That's \$5 on a tank of gas. If I burn three tanks of gas in a month, that's 15 bucks; four tanks, 20 bucks. It starts to add up for families who are operating on a very stringent budget or actually operating below that budget where they can't afford to get items.

So I do applaud government. I do applaud them for coming forward with this. We need to do it elsewhere. We need to start eliminating taxes and that off other fuels, home heating fuels and that, but this is certainly a step in the right direction. There are people out there who will find and feel the positive effects of this, but I speak on behalf of my colleagues over here, that we need to take it a step further. We need to say, get rid of the tax. It's an essential item in that Consumer Price Index. In that basket of goods, fuel is an essential item that affects a lot of things in that basket of goods.

We will certainly be supporting this bill, no doubt about it, but we would like to advocate as well for something that's more permanent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, it's nice to stand in my place in this House, aside from Question Period and any other things we do and talk about legislation. I guess when we talk about this piece of legislation, Bill 106, it's about the reduction in gas tax, which I don't like – as my colleague from Topsail - Paradise said, it was not about being against that but it's important in any debate that no matter what direction you're voting, to stand in your place and pass your commentary on the legislation, whether you're in favour of it or you're against it.

I always try to say I speak in my role as a Member and representing the people of Conception Bay South. I guess, in context, really, you're trying to explain but you're trying to bring their concerns. When you talk, a lot of times, you're speaking on issues that you hear in your district on a daily basis. No matter where you go to throughout your district, people talk to you and gas tax is among the many other taxes out there and other pressures on the economy are having an impact. I mean, it's a pretty heavy impact on the people in this province, the price of gas alone. This morning, I believe it was at Costco's price, I think it's \$1.65 a litre.

You know, we look at that, there's 20 cents on that that's from carbon tax. Now I know governments are at an epiphany and they've changed the mode and carbon tax is bad now, but for many years it was the saviour.

On that note, I think it's imperative that probably – I've said this many times and it's probably a bit of frustration on my part on this side of the House – during the debate last year or the year before, I believe, we were debating the federal carbon tax backstop, I guess. At the time, the province was no longer able to use the Made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador approach, we had to go into the federal plan.

So we had a debate here in the House of Assembly – and it's important to give a history on it as well, how we got to this gas tax, because I don't know if a lot of people realize it. We were always opposed to any form of carbon tax, whether if the federal government is imposing it or the provincially government were imposing it, we never did agree. It's been our record for many years.

I got elected in 2015, one of my first shadow roles was climate change and it was carbon pricing. As a caucus, we were kind of spinning our wheels because we really didn't know where we were going. I know, Speaker, you remember our good friend the former Member from Cape St. Francis, when that conversation came up, he really used to spin his wheels because it was a conversation that he didn't really want to engage in. But we did engage in it and we landed in a place and we never felt that was appropriate; never felt that's how you deal with climate change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: And we still don't. We've never waived off that.

As I said, government opposite decided to go that route. Anyway, when we were debating this legislative change, we were adamant, we kept the House open, we were debating the legislation into the night, I think it went for a couple of evenings, and it come down to it, we strongly felt – still to this day we feel – you had to give some reprieve to the people of this province. You're going to still impose a tax, it's just who's collecting it.

It was going in the federal coffers instead of provincial coffers. That was the only change. We were still getting nailed with a carbon tax.

I think government done a really terrible job in how they handled getting on and getting off this plan because I think from day one we should have stood up to the federal government and said no. Like happened in recent years, now, all of a sudden, even our new prime minister, they're all against carbon tax and he was the architect behind the carbon tax.

So we debated it into the night. When it got down to it, we said we needed relief for the people of this province. There had to be some form of relief. Through that debate, through that lobbying and through that back and forth – the current Minister of Finance was involved in that conversations among others – there was agreement made about reducing the gas tax – a reduction in gas tax. The government at the time initiated \$500 cheques for everyone as a reprieve.

Through a debate in here, that was agreed upon. We agreed to let it come out of Committee for the bill to pass the House.

A lot of people do not realize what happened that night. We have never gotten one iota of credit for it. Within days after the Premier and the Minister of Finance were out singing about we're reducing gas tax and how we're doing this for the people of the province and we're giving them \$500 cheques, not once did I hear from the government opposite that it came from lobbying of the Opposition. That was direct lobbying in this House of Assembly by the Opposition that made that happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I've never heard it. I understand government and Opposition, I get that. That's the game we're into. I don't think it would ever have had happened, I really, truly do not believe that would have

ever happened in the form it did, only for pressure applied by the Opposition.

So people can sit and stand in this House and question what Opposition's roles are and what we do. That's a prime example of effective Opposition. Because if you rubberstamp stuff and let government do whatever, I don't think the people of the province will ever get what they need. Is that what they got back then, what's needed? The gas tax reduction, it helps, no doubt. We still have 20 cents carbon tax on our gas. We're still sitting with 20 cents extra on a litre of gasoline through carbon tax. So that's still there.

Does it come off? The government opposite will tell you it's the federal government's responsibility. I mean, no doubt it is, but there needs to be some other reprieve. We're looking at \$1.65, really if you add that, we would be over \$2 a litre if you added both of them back on. The seven cents, which is 8.5 with taxes into it, plus the carbon tax, you're almost at 30 cents a litre. That's unbearable.

Now, Speaker, in this province, as my role as Health critic, I've always said and I keep saying, health care – and I should add cost of living – are the number one issues facing these people of our province today. That's not changed today, it's not changed last week and it's not going to change tomorrow. You can bring in those changes, you can reduce the taxes and that's all helpful. But there has to be a more fulsome approach – government likes to use that word sometimes. You just can't cherry pick. This here, no doubt it helps, but it has to be more sustainable. I find sometimes it's like you're constantly putting out a fire.

That night we were in that debate and to get the bill through, it was agreed upon. We were happy because we were getting relief for the province. But the next thing you know, we gave government a platform to go out and pat themselves on the back for the wonderful work they did. But I don't think

that would ever happen without us lobbying hard for it.

That's something that I guess within debates, within a Legislature, within a lot of this legislation, there grows some, I guess, resentment – probably for want of a word. Who suffers in that regards: the people of the province.

Last week, we were in the House here and the tariffs: How come you're not asking us questions on tariffs, they're important to the people of the province? How dare you not ask questions. But when you start asking questions you realize quickly why you're not asking questions. You are led with responses that were just like – I think one of our Members said – and you wonder why we're not asking you questions. It can't be this way. It's not the way it's meant to be. It's certainly not the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it is in this House, but it's not the way it's supposed to be.

When we come and we talk gas tax, it's very important for people of the province to understand how we ever got here, why we're here and we need to do more and we need to do more on a lot of fronts, but government always likes to use the word, and their favourite word: we got to be collaborative and people want you to collaborate with each other. I've never seen much collaboration in this Legislature, Speaker. It's a nice word to be used, but at the end of the day, collaboration is just a word.

We do continue and will continue to lobby for people that we represent because it's very important. But it's important also to get the facts straight.

Speaker, as we talk about the gas tax, how we get here and a lot of other dysfunctions that happened in the House where we have arrived to. The Third Party of late likes to make a lot of noise about, I guess, collaboration or they seem like they've made a bit of point of directing some of their

commentary towards the Official Opposition on a lot of the way we operate. This is the party of carbon tax. This is the crowd that supports carbon tax. They support 20-odd cents a litre on gasoline. That's a known fact.

SPEAKER: Stay relevant to the bill.

B. PETTEN: I'm talking about gas tax, Speaker, and I'm talking about –

SPEAKER: Keep with the bill.

B. PETTEN: – the affect that it has on the –

SPEAKER: Not the carbon tax, this is the gas bill.

B. PETTEN: But I have to get that point in, because you know you get Members, there are two of them over there, and they get great pleasure in sometimes going out and trying to ridicule us and to show us up. The last count I did, there are 14 here and there are two there. So I don't know, we have another election coming up, we'll see then, but I don't know what the purpose of us being their target. They should be wanting to get over on the other side, but for some reason they seem to like to take a bit of joy in poking it at us. But in fairness, fair is fair, this is the party of carbon tax.

Now lately we know it has come to a little bit of an NDP-Liberal coalition, we know that's happening. We're not really sure where that's going but maybe that's what's going on. But I'd be remiss if I didn't bring it up and make a point of that here today, because I can go a lot longer on that, we have Interim Supply too, Speaker, there's a lot more free reign on it, but I think that needs to be brought up as well.

The same crowd, I don't know if they're going to vote for or against this tax break. I mean, we'll be supporting it because we need that and a lot more, but I'm not so sure, maybe they should make a motion to have the carbon tax rescinded as well.

I'd like to see them make that motion too. Maybe that's where we all should be pressuring. Maybe both sides of the House should be pressuring them to stand in their place and ask for that to be rescinded by the federal government because there is a relationship federally as well, with the NDP so I'm not sure where they're to with it but I'm not sure if they know where with it, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Move back to the bill.

B. PETTEN: It's very important that we make that point.

Speaker, when we talk about the cost of living and gas tax being the cost of living, it's funny about it. It's when you ask for money, when you ask for relief, when you ask for a gas tax reduction, when you're looking for it, and you're looking for help for the people: we don't have the money; how reckless of Opposition to ask for any breaks; how dare you. I mean, it was a private Member's resolution went through a while ago and a tax break on insurance, HST off certain things. They were ridiculed. Whoever brought it in was ridiculed and it was days later that it was a tax break for three months because it was their idea.

Only when it's their idea. When they need something, there's lots of money. When anyone else needs it, you're being reckless with the public purse. Where do you think we're getting the money to? How do we afford this? That's a dysfunction that happens in this Legislature and that's a dysfunction that we navigate through. We navigate through a very tangled web every day to try to navigate through this House of Assembly on any issue. Gas tax is one of many issues.

I'm not sure the public really understand it. I don't think the general public really get that concept. The opportunity – to my point of when I stood in the beginning – it's very important for us to get that information out to our electorate. Out to people we

represent, because people don't know, don't have a clue sometimes, what's going on in this Legislature. But that's the environment that we operate in. It could be adversarial, and it can be disagreeable, and we can be getting a long, it could be very harmonious but it's not always like that.

But a lot of times through this debate, underneath all these issues that you're bringing up is humans, it's personal, there's people involved there.

Nothing more certain than the cost of living. So as gas tax, this piece of legislation, we're going to reduce it by 8.5 cents with tax included is a good start but, I think, I really do believe, that we need to seriously look at other measures. There are good measures, Speaker.

Back in the previous, previous, when it was the PC administration, it was on home oil rebates of the day – I can't remember exactly the program, but some of these were great, great programs, and we've heard that from many over the years since. They were to give reprieve to seniors and people struggling to make ends meet.

So gas is just one of many. That's the low-hanging fruit; there are a lot of other things they should have left in that they took out because it wasn't their idea. It wasn't their idea; it was the PC idea. Sometimes that shortsightedness can get you in trouble when you're trying to govern because you're not governing for the people then, you're governing for political reasons. It's not about people. Our argument would be, and our leader always says it: It got to be about people, not politics. Sometimes it turns into political debates, but if you focus your energies, if you focus your decisions on people first, a lot of times you'll make the right decision.

And to use the excuse sometimes that government haven't got the fiscal ability. I question that because the stream of announcements that we've heard and we

continue to hear in the last year or two, they multi-billion-dollar announcements. There's no good throwing anything up to us that they can't afford it and use this excuse and that excuse for a reason. Oh, Muskrat Falls was the problem, but the last time I checked, that doesn't seem to affect anything.

Spending is up. I mean, money is flowing. When the government took over December 2015, I believe the budget was around \$6.5 billion, maybe \$7 billion, a year. I stand to be corrected; I think I'm about in that ballpark. This years' coming budget – which we don't know when it's coming yet; we might try to find that in the next couple of days – we could be up to \$11 billion or \$12 billion. But I recall vividly, in this Legislature, the Members opposite were crawling out, shouting across the way, back when there were only seven Members on this side: We were spending like drunken sailors. The shameful behaviour we had on this side of the Legislature when we were over there, spending like drunken sailors.

In a little less than 10 years, the money in our budget, the spending is doubled. Just think about that – doubled.

SPEAKER: Bring it back to the bill.

B. PETTEN: I'm talking about taxes, Speaker, and gas tax being one of them and that does have an affect on the bottom line. That is a part of the revenue stream. If you're looking at a budget that doubled because of government spending; then, they're going to say: Well, you know, as people come in and we all come in and we line up at the door with our cap in hand, they're going to knock off 7.5 cents or eight cents a litre, which is fine.

There are a lot more measures government can make if your spending is up to that degree. There are a lot more measures that you can make to help the people of the province, and there has been some. I know the Minister of Finance might jump up and

list off some things; I promoted some of them. Actually, we had line coming through our office getting seniors \$400 – the senior's cost of living at home. I can't remember the name of it.

SPEAKER: Aging Well at Home.

B. PETTEN: The Aging Well at Home.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

A very good program and I never knocked that. A lot of seniors availed of it. That's not my point. My point of the matter is the budget is doubled and people still struggle. If you ask for any help for people, we can't afford it. If you need to spend, we've got barrels. At the end of the day, Speaker, it's about – getting back to my point – it's about the people we all represent. They still struggle.

So to say the optics of giving back this money on the gas – continuing on the gas tax should be continuing on forever and more. They should work with their NDP colleagues to reduce this 20-cent carbon tax on gas, as well. We've long lobbied for that, so they should work in collaboration with their alliance and get that reduced as well.

Imagine if we had another 20 cents in addition to this eight: almost 30 cents off a litre. So, in actual fact, we could have our gas down to \$1.40, \$1.45. That would be a real savings. Sure, seven is fine but imagine if we had the carbon tax also, as well. That'd be real savings. Maybe you could apply it to home furnace oil and all the rest of the fuels. That would be real savings.

But you can't just speak, you can't just budget on what's of interest to you. It's got to be about the people of this province. So if our budgeting is doubled in the last 10 years, we've doubled to nearly – we're looking at 10 to 11, we don't know what this budget – it could be 12. It could be actually doubled. Who benefits, because people are still struggling? Who benefits? It's the shiny

photo ops, it's the announcements. We've seen lots of these announcements. I don't know who's tracking the progress on the bills or where we're to with any of that. A lot of great announcements.

But we haven't seen much. More questions than answers. More questions than answers, Speaker.

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, he gets distracted really easy, Speaker. He's easily distracted. I used to be told that when I was in school, Speaker. But the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, he's easily distracted. I hear him in the background. He's not talking to me, but he's distracted. I used to be like that when I was in the classroom. But here today, and most days, I try not to be distracted. I have my moments.

But on that note, Speaker, I'll take my seat, and I thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, in 2024, almost half of all Canadians reported that they were struggling keeping up with the rising cost of everything. So, in 2024, over 45 per cent of Canadians said that they were struggling with day-to-day expenses because of the rising costs. If someone wants to question relevance on that, I would say a part of that boils down to what we pay for gasoline.

Last week, the Minister of Finance stood up and boasted that we pay the least amount of taxes on gasoline in the country. I would argue we may pay the least amount provincially, but overall, I'd be curious to see if that number stands still. As a matter of fact, I would say when it comes to the

provinces, we pay more per litre for gasoline than any other province in the country and, on top of that, we pay more than a couple of territories. Northwest Territories pays more than us.

So when you want to talk about the cost of living and throw around facts based on taxes and what we're paying here and what we're not paying, the reality of it is that it cost Newfoundlanders more to go to the pumps than it costs pretty much anyone else in Canada. That is the issue at hand here.

When I go fill up my vehicle, and I understand that the overall tax associated with that is nearly 35 per cent, do I welcome the seven-cent reprieve? Absolutely, 100 per cent. Absolutely, I think every single individual in Newfoundland and Labrador welcomes this bill and the fact that there's seven cents going to come off the price of gas or remain off – not come off, seven cents remain off for the next 12 months.

What I would say is that it would be great to see this locked in for a longer period of time to give some people reassurance. Does it go long enough? I would argue no. We'd all like to see it longer, so people understand what they have to face going forward.

When we talk about gasoline and what it does and we look at rural Newfoundland versus urban and the cost and you go out around the bay, the reality is that in Newfoundland, the further you live away from a centre – be that centre Grand Falls, Corner Brook, Clarenville or Gander – it cost people more to live. That cost is associated with the fact that they have to travel in order to get groceries, see their doctors and pretty much everything they do on a day-to-day basis.

So they contribute more when it comes to how much gas they burn in order to do things. If you have to travel 200 kilometres to see a physician or get groceries, or 50 kilometres, whatever it is, or 50 kilometres

to go to work, it really puts a different burden on those individuals.

Someone approached me a couple of weeks ago and their question was, why do we pay flat rates on taxes when it comes to gasoline? Why isn't it a set rate there? Then when gasoline goes up, we know what we're paying for gasoline and we know that whatever the total would be, 23 cents total on each litre, separated between what goes to the Canadian government and the provincial government. I couldn't answer the question. But when I think about it, it doesn't sound like a bad idea because the reality is every time the price of gas goes up, the province and the country get to collect more taxes. If it was a flat rate, we'd know exactly what it is.

We live in a province where we talk about what we do for our people and I'll give a couple of really good examples. I'm sure that the minister will say relevance, but I'll explain the relevance as I get into this.

Right now, if you go to Labrador West or, as an example, Voisey's Bay, you go to two communities that are heavily dependent on the mining industry, that are heavily dependent on the people who come to do the work, that are not dependent on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, with the exceptions of the ones that live in the areas or commute back and forth. If you go to Labrador City or Voisey's Bay, you will see trucks, all from Quebec, all with Quebec licence plates on them; we don't do a thing about it. You will understand that the thermal generation that happens in Voisey's Bay, every millilitre – I won't say litre – of fuel that operates those thermal generation plants comes out of Quebec; we don't say a word about it.

You go to Quebec and you try to bring a dozen beer across the border into Labrador City and you're in trouble. Now just think about that. The *Umiak* leaves Voisey's Bay, sails to Newfoundland to offload its cargo. It's here; it doesn't buy fuel. It goes to

Quebec City and it fills up with Quebec fuel and goods, everything comes out of there, and it goes to Voisey's Bay.

For those in the House who may not be familiar with Voisey's Bay, it's in our province. It's on the Coast of Labrador. It's a part of what we do. I'm sure that there are people who don't understand that but the reality of it is that is a piece of infrastructure that's here in this province. When you talk about thermal generation and the amount of fuel that goes through that, it's astronomical.

Now, consider the taxes we are losing. Consider the jobs that aren't in place because of. Consider the other things that could happen. We talk about gas taxes and taxes in this province and we overlook how we do business all the time. The PUB – so we've heard in this House lots of times the PUB is stand-alone entity, and I totally agree. I've had lots of constituents tell me that they think the PUB should be eliminated. Personally, I don't agree with that. When I listen to what the PUB does and the regulations they bring in and how they manage things, they play an important role, but I still don't understand the five-cent gas tax that has been put in.

Some people refer to that gas tax as the North Atlantic refining tax; it is not. It has nothing to do with it. It is for storage of fuels that are brought into the province. It never existed before when we were refining our own fuel. I'll say again, if you look across the country, not every province has a refinery. A lot of provinces import fuel, but there is no five cents added on for that.

When we sit and we look at how we do things, fuel has always been shipped to this province even when North Atlantic was refining its own fuel. Irving would bring fuel in, as would Esso and others. Components were brought in. There was always components to the refining process that were shipped in. This five cents, in my opinion, comes from nowhere.

I understand the fact that the refinery found a way to make their argument and make this happen, but the reality is – and I've had this conversation lots of times – when it comes to our propane and our gasoline, we are playing roulette with the people of this province. Because if a tanker comes in here with gasoline after a tank our there is empty and they don't meet the specs for this province, we could be in a situation where we're out of fuel for months – not days, months – and we cannot afford that.

It's the same thing with propane. Last week in this province, and I'm sure people in this House don't understand or know, we were at a critical point in this province with propane where it was not available.

So we talk about gas tax and we go back to what it does. If we are paying a fee for storage to companies to make sure we have a product, they ought to be responsible to make sure that product is here. They're not being held accountable. If we run out of fuel, there are going to be a lot of people in this province that are in a bad situation.

Last summer, one ship came in, it didn't meet the spec and the only way that we moved forward with that ship was that ship had a blending capability. Not every ship that brings fuel to this province has that capability. They had the ability to add the chemicals back into the gasoline to make it meet the spec, therefore we could keep it. We had gas stations throughout the whole province with stickers on their pumps saying sorry, we don't have fuel. If that ship had to get turned away, that situation would have went on for months.

We talk about the cost of living in the province and the gas tax and what we do, and everyone knows the idea of gas tax, the money is to come back to the province to help fix roads, but the consumer spends the money in order to put that money back in the provincial coffers. While spending that money, it adds an increase to everything they do.

Everything we do in this province is affected by how gasoline is taxed, whether it's our provincial gas tax, whether it's the five-cent tax from the refinery or whether it's carbon tax. When we bring goods past Port aux Basques to come across the Island, every kilometre costs us extra money because of what we pay in taxes. For every cent we pay extra, it goes back to the consumer for the cost of everything we import here – everything – and it's difficult. It's why the cost of living here is so expensive.

I'll go back again to what the minister said. The minister said we have the lowest provincial tax in the country. Misleading, the way it was put out there; it was as if we had the cheapest gas, but we don't have close to the cheapest gas. Again, the most expensive gasoline in the country – the most expensive gasoline in the country.

You go around and ask a fisherman who depends on it, or you ask a truck driver who depends on it, or you look at people who are just basically driving around the province or living in rural Newfoundland; go to a cancer patient who lives in St. Anthony who has to drive to St. John's because there is not oncology in Corner Brook and ask them what it costs them. Every single cent hurts these individuals.

Don't take my word for it; go to the Stats Canada report from 2024 that says 45 per cent of all Canadians are struggling to keep up with the cost of living – 45 per cent.

In today's world, where we sit here and we debate what's right and what's wrong and what we're struggling with in this province, the cost of gasoline is one of the driving factors for everything we do. I can remember I think it was last year during the budget, we came out with a four-point plan, maybe, and one part of that plan was electric cars.

I would say this, we have a lot of municipalities in this province that depend on what they get back for gas tax. What are

they going to do when the gas tax, per se, is eliminated? How are they going to get their money when it's electric cars? When electric cars aren't filling up, what's the province's plan to counteract that part? There isn't a plan and the more we electrify, the less money comes in and the more we have to be concerned about it.

I believe in debate about carbon tax a couple of years ago, the solid number was 35 per cent of what we pay on fuel was taxes. Now, with the elimination of the seven cents, that number goes down I would suggest somewhere around 31 or 32 per cent, but it's still too much.

My colleague from CBS highlighted earlier that this government supported the carbon tax. The minister will tell you that they didn't support carbon tax, that we got nothing to do with it, it was a federal initiative; but they did support it when it was a provincial plan, when the money was coming back into their coffers. The moment that stopped, it was gone. All bets were off. We hate carbon tax now. They're taking our money. The big bad federal Liberals, we don't like them anymore.

The reality of it was that this government accepted the carbon tax. They accepted the money that was coming from the carbon tax and they voted for it. Last year, when the federal government stepped in and said we have to change this, then it was the big, bag bogeyman coming to take all their money and they didn't want nothing to do with them. So the truth is, this government did bring in the carbon tax. There is zero question about it.

What does seven cents mean to someone who commutes to work every day? I would say, what does seven cents mean to a fisherman who has to go offshore every day in his boat? What does seven cents mean to the individual who relies on wood to heat their homes and they have to put gasoline in their chainsaws or their Argos or however they get out to heat their homes? What do

seven cents mean to places like Daffodil Place or other places where we have volunteers that are driving to help sick people get to the hospital?

It's a lot, but I'll tell you what, the remaining of that tax is still equally as much. When you think about the 12.4 cents, seven cents doesn't take it all off and people are not able to keep up with the cost of living. This gas tax bill ought to go further. It ought to be, probably, brought out for multiple years, maybe for another 10 years, maybe for 20, maybe indefinitely. I don't know, but it is my belief that we pay too much and, in turn, at the end of the day, everything in Newfoundland costs too much.

We can sit here all we want and say it's the highest rate of employment that the province has seen. I would argue that we still have the highest unemployment rate in the country. We can say that we have more people working today than we've ever had before. I would say bring those people home from Alberta and other places in the country and tell me how many people we got working in the province. That's the statistic that we never hear anyone boast about.

We can talk about the amount of flights, we can talk about green energy, we can talk about Braya fuels and their transition. We now see that that's not working. We now know that the refinery is in jeopardy out there. We ought to have found a way to keep producing gasoline in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Every single thing we do in this province, whether it's government or it's private business or individuals, require some sort of transportation. So when we look at our government vehicles and what we do, when we look at our flyers out on the road, when we look at snow clearing and all of the functions of government, we know that this number is astronomically high and

what it does is drive the cost of everything up.

You go to the grocery store now and you watch so many people go to the checkout and when they get there, they're checking things out. Whether it's a jug of orange juice or a steak, they're watching the cash register as the number goes up and they get to a point where they say, no, I don't want that. I can't get that. Can you take that back? Can you refund that? I see it almost every time I go to the grocery store.

Now, I'm not saying that that's a direct result of the gas tax, but I am saying it's a direct result of the taxes we pay on fuel in general. The seven cents is a help, but it doesn't go far enough. We need to find a way to get rid of carbon tax, we need to find a way to put a long-lasting tax break on provincial gas tax and we need to find a way to eliminate or find a way not to be taxing all forms of home heating, not just rebates for fuels.

The PUB recently did a review on the five cents and they have said that it's here to stay. Most people in the public probably don't know that, but that five cents, while we don't think it's a lot, we took seven off to offset it. So I guess the question is, is the seven cents to offset the refinery and the other gas producers? Is that how we keep them coming? Is that how we did that?

I don't know, but I will say this, when I go fuel up, I know what it costs me. I don't mind saying it, I drive a pickup truck and there's not a day goes by when I don't look at it and say I got to get rid of this, because it is through the roof.

This bill is an important bill, we understand that, and it's a bill that needs to be passed by the 31st of March. We support the bill in its principle, there's no question about it, but what I would say is from a principle standpoint, again, I don't believe it goes far enough. It ought to be much longer and it ought to give us a larger break.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, we come in here every day and we listen to people talk about the struggles. We listen to people talk about health care concerns. We listen to all of those things. We know right now they're looking at putting another thermal generation plant on the south coast of Labrador and I'd be curious where we buy our fuel for that stuff because, to be honest, I don't know.

I would be curious as to whether or not we're utilizing fuel that comes from Newfoundland or not for any of the islands in the province, certainly for the Coast of Labrador and that. Maybe that's coming from Quebec too. If it is, I'd say shame on you. I'd say shame on government if that's the case. But I do know it does come from Quebec when it goes to Voisey's Bay.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, on that note, I'll take my seat. I will say I don't believe that this bill goes far enough and I think that we should be looking to extend it in a way and possibly broaden how much of a break it gives people.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Oscar Wilde said: There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that's not being talked about. I do have to thank the Official Opposition House Leader for talking about us. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: Deeply appreciate it, thanks for the attention but we can have beers later on if you want.

First of all, we know where we are clearly and that's on the side of the people in our districts and the people in this province who are struggling, no two ways about it. Certainly, with regard to the people whose stories I've brought to the House of Assembly here and the stories that my colleague for Labrador West has brought forward, whether it's in supporting an MOU that's going to benefit directly his district or looking for increases, Speaker, in support for people who are struggling. I will say this: Say what you will about carbon tax, carbon rebate, one thing we do know is that the climate crisis is going to have a direct cost and is having a direct cost on the cost of living and the people it's going to affect the most are the people with the lowest income. It's as simple as that.

I know several people in my district – many, actually – who didn't drive but who benefited greatly from the carbon rebate. Actually, it helped them get through some rather difficult times. So whatever plan we come in with, it's going to have to tackle the climate crisis, which not every party recognizes, and it's going to also have to make sure that those who are most vulnerable, do not get pushed further into the margins.

I'm not going to speak long on this, but I will say this, we can talk about the gas tax, and that's going to benefit anyone who has a car for sure, but there are also people who do not drive. Many of the people in my district and many of the people who contact our office, they do not drive. There is no public transportation. That's where we could also be investing money for that matter.

When it comes to the removal of the HST on all forms of home heating, that's another way that we would benefit everyone as well as an option, but I will tell you this and these are the stories, Speaker, that I guess bother me the most, and I'll go into this later on during the budget debate. But the mother of three I raised in Question Period, who doesn't drive, on income support, \$1,450 a month is what she's paying right now. She's

at the end, Speaker, of what subsidies she can get, and her rent is going to go up by another \$600, over \$2,000, in June. She doesn't know where she's going to live.

The savings in the gas tax will not help her; it will not help her. She's had an application in Housing since February 2024; no word on that yet. She sent in a renewal in January 2025, and not expecting any help, Speaker. I really don't know what to say to her at times, but I know that right now, the savings in the gas tax will not help her. It will help me, it will help anyone with a vehicle, I understand that, but it will not help this lady, this mom.

She says at one point that in 2019, she was technically homeless, after she and her husband split up, and they got her a unit within a couple of months, but when she was about to move in, they realized her ex was the primary caregiver. Here's the other problem that we have, if we went about fixing people, making things better for peoples lives. Once they realized that, they cancelled the unit. Sorry, you can't get it because the father is the primary caregiver. But she could get one, once she got the children full time or at least more than 50 per cent or something.

Here's the situation this single mother is in: I had no place, nowhere to take my kids to get them more than 50 per cent of the time, but I needed my kids in order to get a place. She needed a place so she could have the kids, but she needed the kids to get a place. I didn't understand that all back then and it reminds me again of the Progressive Conservative Senator Hugh Segal who said that the social safety net is strong enough to entangle, but too weak to lift up.

You see, the people call me. They're at their wit's end; they've got nowhere to go. The problems are not as simple as saying: I'll call up a minister and get an application, but these are the problems, and there's not just one of them. I've got others here, and I'll

spend some time, like I said, when we debate the budget, Speaker.

But if we want to fix – and I'll agree with the Member for Terra Nova, it doesn't go far enough. We need a whole scale reimagining of how we provide support for the most vulnerable. Whether it's through something as forward thinking as basic income, whether it's about making sure that the minimum wage is livable and then index it to inflation, whether it comes down to about making sure that Seniors' Benefit is brought up to a reasonable standard of living and then indexed. But if for some point – or better yet, more non-market, community-based housing.

Speaker, we can talk about the gas tax and no problem, we'll support that. But I will tell you that the people who call my office, not just from my district but from across the province, are dealing with situations where, for them, it's the decision between eating and paying other bills or being homeless. That's the other thing we find, people have got to be homeless first before they get to the priority. Once they're evicted, once they're homeless. We've been told that on more than one occasion.

So, for me, I guess probably the most frustrating is trying to find solutions for people who are struggling. They don't drive, many of them. Some of them were getting the carbon rebate, and that's actually helping with their bills and putting food on their table. But they're finding their affordability issues are not with an increase in gas tax, it's about the exorbitant increase in rent and electricity, and so on and so forth.

If I had: Will I support this bill? I will say this: We've got to go a lot further to make sure that people are doing well because I think if we want to make sure our society is thriving, then we've got to make sure that the people around us are doing well. That's how we have a healthy, cohesive society, and one where a person like the president of the

United States has no in, because as long as people's needs are met, I think for the most part and people feel they're doing well, people are healthy, society is healthy.

I'll leave it at that, Speaker, and I look forward to the budget debate. I have other examples that are specific things that we need to address.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are there any other speakers?

Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Finance speaks now, we'll close the debate.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Thank you to all my colleagues for the wide-ranging and interesting debate on the gas tax. I'll remind listeners today, who I'm sure have been tuning in across the province, that what we're debating today is continuing the very low gas tax in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As you've heard throughout this debate, Newfoundland and Labrador currently has the lowest gas tax in the country at 7.5 cents per litre. As part of our efforts to continue to keep the cost of living as low as possible for people, we introduced this measure a couple of years ago. Last year around the same time, Speaker, I extended the low gas tax for another year, and that's exactly what we're proposing today.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador sits at 7.5 cents per litre in gasoline tax. I'll compare that to some of the provinces across the country. Saskatchewan, for example, is at 15 cents per litre; Alberta is at 13 cents a litre; British Columbia is at 14.5 cents a litre; Nova Scotia is at 15.5 cents a litre. Just to give you an example of the provincial gas tax across this country.

Now, Speaker, I know that the Official Opposition might be a little bit sensitive towards this. I know that they said they're going to support it, but we had a wide ranging and very long debate about this. When they spent a decade as government, the gas tax at that time was 16.5 cents a litre – 16.5 cents a litre in Newfoundland and Labrador. Today it's 7.5 cents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: Now I hear the chirping on carbon tax; I hear the continuous chirping on carbon tax. I will say this government has not supported the carbon tax. We wrote on many occasions, spoke on many occasions to the prime minister to say that we felt that carbon tax was not the right time, that it was impacting the cost of living.

I am happy to say, and I think that there was a big discussion last night when the new Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, the new prime minister, the prime minister designate and elect – he will soon become our prime minister, Mark Carney, has said that he will remove the carbon tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: He's going to remove the carbon tax. So I don't know what the Members of the Opposition are going to even be able to speak about from here on in because that carbon tax will be removed.

Speaker, so the debate today was supposed to be only – because the bill is very specific. The bill will amend the *Revenue Administration Act* to extend the reduction of the tax on certain grades of gasoline by seven cents per litre until March 31, 2026. It is literally one clause to amend the bill to allow for the continuance of the low cost of gasoline tax, the lowest in the country.

Speaker, I will say I think it's appropriate, and I did hear from Members of this House say that they all supported it, and I'm glad to

say that they support it because it is the right thing to do.

This government has continuously tried to ensure that the cost-of-living impacts are less on the people of this province. This government has worked very, very hard to ensure that \$750 million has been put back in the pockets of the people of this province. That's a tremendous feat, Speaker. I hear the Members of the Opposition talk about, you know, you have to reduce your spending. I heard it again today. I can say to the people of this province that we chose very deliberately – we have a slight deficit this year, but we chose very deliberately to put the money back in their pockets.

Now, the Members opposite did not support us in it. They did not support the budget. They did not support us when we made the highest investment in health, the highest investment in housing, the highest investments in the Child Benefit in this province. But I read out, when we were having the debate on Interim Supply, some of the effects of things that are happening in this province and we had a wide-ranging debate, and I say to the Members Opposite who may be chirping, I say to the Members opposite, look, it is very important that we continue to focus on what's important to the people of this province, and what's important to the people in this province is many things.

I know that it's health care, and that's why we've made some big investments, huge investments on the Health Accord. I know that it is also keeping the cost of living low. That's why we, again, have said that we're going to keep the cost of our gasoline tax the lowest in the country. That's compared to what it was when the Progressive Conservatives were in power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: So I hear the chirping across the way, but I'll remind them that the

gasoline tax was 16.5 cents under their watch; it's 7.5 cents under ours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: Now they're chirping about carbon tax, but that's a federal tax. They can chirp to their federal colleagues on this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: So, Speaker, I will say this is going to cost the government a tremendous amount of money to be able to do this. It will cost this government about \$70 million. I think it's \$70.5 million, actually, if memory serves. I can't put my hand on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: There's an awful lot of noise in here today.

About \$70.4 million. But, Speaker, it is an important investment for the people of the province. It is the right thing to do at the right time. I think it does give them certainty for the year, to ensure that for the next year. The Members opposite know, we've heard from the federal government saying that they're going to eliminate the carbon tax and, therefore, this will be savings on top of that elimination.

I will say that on this side of the House, we've been very fiscally responsible, very, I think, strategic in making sure that we're putting investments back into the people of this province. I also announced at the time that I announced this particular measure, Speaker, that we're also continuing a 50 per cent reduction in the cost of registering vehicles. That's money back in the pockets –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: – of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I also announced that we're going to continue with the home heat rebate that we have put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: Speaker, I'm smiling because the Members opposite gave exactly these points in their speech so I'm going to continue on, Speaker.

But I will say, I think this is the right move to make. This is the right thing to do. It's a responsible thing to do and I appreciate the support of the other side.

With that, Speaker, I will take my seat and say that I am glad that the provincial gasoline tax will remain the lowest in the country – the lowest in the country – for another year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 106 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

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

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

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 106)

SPEAKER: the hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 106.

SPEAKER: Seconder for that motion, please.

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 106.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 106, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 7." (Bill 106)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

It's always a good day when we can stand in the House of Assembly and talk about reducing a tax burden on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Certainly, the 7.5 cents is part of that but it's also nice to remind the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, as the Minister of Finance likes to do, about the significant amount of fee increases and taxes that have been added over the last 10 years.

While they have great pleasure now in talking about how much they don't support carbon tax, it wasn't that long ago when I sat here in the House of Assembly on the debate on carbon tax where the Liberal government opposite introduced carbon tax to our province, and not only introduced it, also voted again to increase it; but not only voted to increase it but actually stood up, different ministers over there, and told us in this House of Assembly, in *Hansard*, how wonderful the carbon tax was.

There were no concerns about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador at that point in time. There was only concern about political opportunity and the political opportunity to collect revenue. When the tides changed and carbon tax became a political issue, it became an issue that, all of a sudden, now they don't support the carbon tax.

But at the same time as they didn't support the carbon tax now and they turned around and have made a temporary reduction in gas tax. They also added that dreaded – you-know-what – sugar tax.

I can't find anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador who supports the sugar tax other than the Members opposite who continue to stand and talk about it. We all know, as again, when I talk about relevancy of taxes, this is tax. So let's talk about tax. That's what tax is: sugar tax, sugar tax, carbon tax, carbon tax. These are all taxes.

One of the things now that's happened, of course, and we all saw it yesterday where there's been a new leader elected in the federal Liberal Party. It's still the same party that basically did not do anything for Newfoundland and Labrador, I would argue, other than impose carbon tax, other than turn around and try to shut down our oil and gas industry. But now they have a leader, and the new leader has promised that he is going to eliminate the carbon tax.

So we're looking forward to the new prime minister, the new leader of the Liberal Party saying he's going to eliminate the carbon tax. I listened to his speech last night and even then, it wasn't even clear what it actually meant. Some portion of it, maybe this, maybe that. Well, he can show a real example right now, because he can turn around and eliminate that carbon tax, as the Member opposite has said, and he can also eliminate the 20 per cent increase that's supposed to come on April 1 for carbon tax, which is of major concern to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So let's start off by eliminating that 20 per cent increase and the carbon tax, because that's important.

This particular gas tax reduction that the Finance Minister opposite talks about, you know, she talks about certainty: the people in Newfoundland and Labrador will have certainty. What they have certainty of is one

year, because we've now only extended it for the one year.

At the same time as we're talking about taxes and wanting to eliminate taxes, hey we're all for that and we intend to do a lot more, I can guarantee you that, when we form the next government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: But let's talk about HST that we all pay on the tax that's on our gasoline. We've all known that; we've all talked about that, the fact that we pay HST on our gas tax. We pay HST on our carbon tax. We pay HST on every other tax. So I would suggest that the first thing we ought to be doing now is writing the new prime minister as well and saying: Hey, not only get rid of your carbon tax while you're at it, because it's bad and we don't support it anymore, but now we all want you to get rid of charging HST on the taxes on gasoline. So let's start with that because that's a collective effort and that needs to be done in conjunction with the federal government and write the letter. Let's get the letter written, let's get that delivered and let's get that eliminated right now.

We can certainly take it off over Christmas on some things and restaurants and others, why not we take HST – it's not about eliminating HST off gas, it's about eliminating HST of the taxes that we already pay on the gas. So let's eliminate the double whammy that we're causing for people all over Newfoundland and Labrador and indeed the country.

It's time for this double taxation to go and I don't think anybody would object to that. Certainly, I would ask the Minister of Finance to write the letter. Write the letter to the new prime minister right now and tell him to get rid of this double taxation, not only for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador but the rest of the country as well.

That's what we need to be doing about it, because everybody that's in this House has talked about the impact on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We can talk about the impact of the gas tax. It's not just about filling up your tank. It's about what you actually have to use your vehicle for in Newfoundland and Labrador. We don't have public transportation systems, at least outside the City of St. John's, maybe a little bit in Corner Brook, but we certainly don't have subways or anything like that. So we don't have those mass transports.

So we all use, for the most part, our own vehicles, rely on our own vehicles or rely on someone else to drive us to where we need to go. Those costs are continuing to go up, as we know, and whether that's just simply going around your community or you're into sports or you're into other events, you travel all the time with different teams – and I'm sure anybody that's been involved in any sporting activity in the province and takes kids around will certainly see the additional cost of transportation. We all know the impacts of goods coming into our province with the additional burden of the carbon tax on our cost of goods and services, how that adds to the price.

All those are simply taxes that impact people, but one of the most hard ways that people in our province are being hit hard by gas and it has to do with health care. Because it's the lack of services that are currently available in many of our health care facilities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador that require people that can no longer get that service in their community, to drive somewhere else to get it.

Now, the Member opposite will talk about their medical transportation program and of the increases they've made to that program. Well, I'm here to tell you and I'll say it to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that when we form government, nobody will have to pay for medical transportation to get to and from.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We will cover 100 per cent of that because we ought to be doing it. But, right now, in lots of facilities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it's the brand new hospital in Corner Brook, oncology patients who were promised an oncology service, they still haven't got an oncology service. They still don't have it, but every one of them has to drive eight hours to St. John's to get that cancer care that was promised for them in their local communities and failed to deliver.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's what gas tax does. It drives up that cost. When I think of the fact that in Stephenville, at one time, there were 16 specialists. It's down to one – down to one. So if you want something done, you've got to travel. Whether you can get to Corner Brook or whether you've got to go to St. John's, it's an increased cost. Gas tax plays a part in all of those costs.

Those are the facts that are out there that are impacting people's lives, and we know it. Everybody in this House of Assembly can tell you a story about an individual who's had to travel for medical services outside of their communities and the cost of that travel. For many people, their only option is to travel by their car or their friend's car.

That's why any time we get an opportunity to reduce gas tax and lessen that burden, we're going to take advantage of it and we're going to do it. That's exactly why we're going to support this measure, we're going to support this reduction, because it will reduce gas tax for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

But, as I said, this is one year only. It doesn't provide the reassurance that people would need. I firmly believe that if we're going to be true to our words, that we ought to make sure that in these troubling times that we find ways to keep reducing the tax

burden for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. One of the best ways to do that is to make this gas tax reduction longer than one year.

What I want to do is bring in an amendment to Bill 106. What I want to do is amend – and here's what it says: That section 1 of the bill be amended by deleting the date "March 31, 2026" and replacing it with the date "March 31, 2050."

CHAIR: An amendment has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition. We will now recess to determine if the amendment is in order.

Recess

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Are the House Leaders ready?

The amendment proposed exceeds the scope of Bill 106 and is, therefore, ruled not in order.

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

L. PADDOCK: Chair, I guess to start, I just want to highlight a number of my colleagues, in particular my colleague from Torngat Mountains, highlighted the impact of the gas tax on the daily life of the residents in her district, in particular, putting food on the table through both hunting and fishing.

So I would like to know from the Minister of Finance what qualitative factors went into the decision to extend the gas tax for one year and not for multiple years?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the Member opposite for his question.

Chair, we analyze in the Department of Finance the revenues that we will receive as a province, and what we can manage within those revenues and how we can actually provide for the services that are required for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As is well noted in this House on multiple occasions, including in budget debate, and I'm sure the Member opposite is looking forward to the upcoming budget as we have detailed Estimates that go through every line of the budget so he can understand every revenue line and every expenditure line. We analyze the budget to see what we can actually possibly do. When we looked at the gasoline tax, originally, as I indicated earlier, it was 16.5 cents per litre prior to 2020, when we started to lower the gasoline tax and we started to lower it because we felt that we could, we had the space within our revenues to be able to start to bring that tax down.

When it came to the cost-of-living challenges, how do we put money back in the pockets of people as quickly as possible and this became one of the avenues that we could use, one of the levers that we could pull to be able to put money back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians expeditiously. If we lowered another tax, like, I'll say personal income tax, it would take that full tax year to be realized into people's pockets. So we decided that we would take the gasoline tax as low as we possibly can and we've established today that it is the lowest in the country at 7.5 cents. I can tell you the high in the country would be in Quebec at 19.2 and even in Ontario, for example, it's at 9 cents. In Saskatchewan it's at 15 cents, Alberta is at 13 cents. So you can see across the country there are some variances and differences.

The rationale and the reasoning is, first of all, we had the revenue space. When we first lowered it in 2022, we wanted to put the monies back into people's pockets as quickly as possible and that was something

that we were able to do, and we wanted to make sure that we were addressing the cost of living.

When the Member opposite questions why is this for one year? That's what we did last year and the year before, was one-year increments. There are a lot of expenditures and impacts on the revenues of this province. Speaker, I know the Member opposite would want us to do as much as we possibly can in health care, in investments in education, as much as we possibly can in investments in roads, in infrastructure.

So, Speaker, I say it's a balance here as to what we could possibly achieve and based on our projections for the next year, in budget, we can continue to keep this gasoline tax lower.

Thank you.

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

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Chair.

The Minister of Finance highlighted, when she was cluing up on this debate, about giving certainty. I think a number of our speakers here highlighted that impact across the health care crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, the housing crisis. In fact, the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans highlighted the impact on families and young people and they're planning to want to stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I come back to that certainty factor and the recurring nature of this tax. Was there any consideration then, with regard to giving certainty, of just doing it for an additional four to five years, the budget planning cycle of many small businesses?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

As an entrepreneur and a small business owner for decades, I can tell you that your budgeting is not four- to five-year cycles, they're usually one-year cycles. You can do a projection out a little bit further, as we do in the provincial government.

I will say, Chair, that we do our analysis on budgets on a five-year cycle, the impacts on a five-year cycle. The Member opposite, when he goes through the budget this year, will be able to see that we do have to plan out on a five-year cycle but we make our decisions, especially on this revenue, on an annual basis because we don't know the impacts of the years to come.

In this year, 2025, we've already had a lot of uncertainty around tariffs, for example, and what we've had to do from an expense perspective. We're looking at how we can free up some money because we need to ensure that we can address and make whole people that are going to be impacted by these tariffs.

So, Chair, I will say I think it's prudent and responsible for this government to ensure that this is for one year and look at it again, as we move forward, to see if we possibly can keep it at this level for longer. I will say to the Member opposite, tax rates can change throughout the year. We've seen that happen sometimes in fall fiscal updates. Thankfully we have not had to do this but in fall fiscal updates, for example. You've seen it on the federal government side, sometimes taxes have to change based on the revenues or based on impacts throughout the year.

I think it's very responsible for us to continue this gasoline tax at the lowest in the country, at this point in time, and we'll make a further decision next year and, hopefully, we can continue it at that point in time.

Thank you.

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

L. PADDOCK: One final question, and this comes back to, I guess, overall tax fairness. It's been highlighted with regard to the use of the gas tax to support our road network. Well, we have EVs that are not paying the gas tax, and potentially autonomous vehicles that won't be paying that gas tax as well.

So I was wondering what the minister has planned with regard to ensuring that all vehicles are paying their fair share of maintaining our roads.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I appreciate the question, and I think it's a very good one.

As we evolve as a society, both here in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada and around the world, there will have to be some consideration for the impacts of autonomous vehicles or electric vehicles. We don't have anything at this point in time. The impacts are very minimal at this point in time, so we have not landed on any new taxation or requirements, for example.

But I will say that I think as things evolve and change in the world, I think that that will be something that will be considered by governments around the world. Certainly nothing anticipated or considered at this point by this government.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Just one question for the minister. Since the year-to-year pause on the gas tax, how much money or funds, I guess, does the province forego from this change?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

We have to wait for our light. So when there's a pause – I notice all of us are doing it – we have to pause to wait for the light. So I'll just tell any listeners that are wondering why there's a pause.

This will cost \$70.4 million, and it is a tremendous impact. You can add that up now, because I think this is our third year or fourth year doing this, of how much of an impact it has been. But I think it is the right thing to do. It immediately puts money back in people's pockets. That's why this government has been very focused on making sure we put money back into people's pockets and do it as quickly and as efficiently as possible, and this is one way of doing it – \$70.4 million per year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Being that it was \$70 million per year for the last three or four years, has there been any way to recuperate the money in other means or has the province strictly foregone that money for the last number of years?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

No, it's foregone revenue. So we haven't replaced it with another tax or another means of collecting revenue. We have had some additional revenues to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador over the last number of years.

You will recall, I'm sure, that we had some increased revenue from corporate taxation and some increased revenues from personal taxation. That was because of a

good economy, and we've been using those revenues. They've been helpful to ensuring that we have the monies available to invest in health care and education and so on and so forth.

As we see a tightening of the economy, we will be concerned about that tightening of revenues. We have seen a decline in oil and gas revenues in the last couple of years, and that's because the price has come down as well as the production has come down.

That's why you have to be really cognizant of where your revenues are coming in from, which pots and buckets are you collecting all your revenues because, of course, once you provide that money to the Department of Health, they're going to spend it. We've given over an additional \$1 billion to the budget of health, for example, and we know that money is being spent.

So we do need to ensure that we collect those revenues that we need to collect in order to fund that, and that's why expanding the economy is so important and has been important to this government.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going to have a few words on this here. First of all, I would have agreed with the amendment from the Official Opposition and I just don't know why government just won't put it in. They're going to do it every year so they get the little photo ops and here's what we're doing for the province and here's an opportunity now to put certainty – and I know the minister already spoke about certainty. So here's an opportunity to have certainty on the gas tax here, and it's just not done.

I just noticed one thing and I don't know if anybody else in the House of Assembly noticed it and I'm sure the Cabinet ministers

may already know. Usually for the roads program across the province, it comes out in January. That gives time that they can call tenders. Do you know there are no announcements yet this year to put out the tender? There are none. I've yet to see an announcement. I checked the website again. There have been no announcements out for the roadwork in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for this year.

This is concerning to me, and I can tell you what's going to happen right now. It's going to be delayed because they always can take money and not even vote on it, just go ahead and just pre-announce the money for the roadwork out of the budget. Here's what's going to happen. There is going to be a lot of roadwork done in certain districts that they're going to say it's not going to be done, they have to wait for next year, for next year's budget. That's what is going to happen.

They are 2½, three months behind now for making announcements. With the amount of roadwork that needs to be done in the province – and they always talk about the billions of dollars they're spending on the five- or six-year road plan, but for this year there's no announcement.

I'm sure the Members who are in the Cabinet know the reason why. Yet, the general population – and I use the District of Humber - Bay of Islands, itself, Route 450 and 440. We just wrote again on a piece of road in Meadows. It is just terrible. They did the ditching last year, tore it up, never paved it. It is just terrible. You will get claims on the road, just in Meadows alone, because last year they just didn't do a bit of work.

CHAIR: I ask the Member to stay relevant to the bill, please.

E. JOYCE: It is.

CHAIR: Gas tax, Bill 106.

E. JOYCE: It is the gas tax, doing the roads. You let everybody else speak now on the roads, too. I expect the same privilege of everybody else and everybody else spoke on the roads, and that's exactly what I'm speaking on, on the roads, the gas tax for the roads.

Here's the problem that I have with that. There's no doubt – and I said it before in this House and I'll say it again – the money for the roadwork, it is ranked but it goes to Cabinet; we don't see it. I know the Member for St. George's - Humber this year went and they said, okay, what do you need? I was told the other day by an official from the department that there might be 10 people a week drives there and the road is paved. The reason why is there's an election coming up. I can name the road and I know it, and this is what's happening here. This is exactly what's happening.

I can tell you right now, the ministers that are in that Cabinet can tell you what's going to be done in their district before the election, what's going to be put out to tender. This here –

AN HON. MEMBER: Misuse of gas tax.

E. JOYCE: Misuse of gas tax, yeah, that's what's happening there.

This is very concerning to me, very concerning. Here's the province taking in the gas tax funds for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but here's what's happening is that only a certain few can make sure that the roads are up to standards and safe. I challenge any person to stand up and say decisions are not made in Cabinet.

I don't mean to be harping on anybody, but there was a case where I saw it in the media, the Official Opposition talked about how the money for the roadwork is discussed in Cabinet and a certain minister came out and said, no it's not, no it's not. I remember the quote during a certain

election, this person said, well, if I want something done, all I have to do is walk into Cabinet and say, minister, I want this done.

But do you know something? He's honest, he's honest when he said that. That's the sad part, he was actually honest when he said that. He was actually honest, because that's the way it's done. That's the sad part. That is actually the sad part.

I said to the Opposition, also, if you ever form the government, which is a chance that you're going to form the government, and if you don't release the rankings and just do it in Cabinet and you're using the gas tax for it, I'll be the first one to stand up and say you're hypocritical because you're complaining what they didn't do. I'll be the first one because it's wrong.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: What?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) know better?

E. JOYCE: No, I can't see me doing it. I think I would, though.

But on a serious note, because I know when the minister takes in the gas tax and it's used for the roads and when you see the Premier getting \$28.5 million in one year, I said it publicly, there's one road that was paved, \$2.2 million I think, or \$2.1 million, I'm just going on memory now, but I have it back at the office. There are more people in the Bay of Islands that use Route 450 that drives from Lark Harbour, York Harbour, Frenchman's Cove, Benoit's Cove, John's Beach, Halfway Point, Mount Moriah, Curling, more drive up in one day than goes across that road in a month and can't get nothing done. It's factual and you all know it.

This is the problem I have with the gas tax that's supposed to be for all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who pay the

gas tax and all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador should share input.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: For the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to stand up and say, well, we're using it for stuff like roads and that. You do use it for roads, but I can tell you, every person that drives – and I just use the District of Humber - Bay of Islands – on the north and south shore is not getting the same benefits as the Members who are in Cabinet in government. I can tell you that right now. I have the access to information to prove how much was done.

The only thing I couldn't get was the rankings. You can get the amount and, even then, when you put in the amounts, you can't get it. You've got to go in district by district. Then you'll get the district by district because it's turned down first when you ask, but then when you go district by district you can get how much was spent.

I know there's one minister over there who's always talking across the floor, he's agreeing with me. I know he is because he was the former minister who was supposed to do some of the stuff and not done.

So you know what I'm talking about – you know what I'm talking about because you were the former minister who committed and it wasn't done. So this is why I say, Madam Chair, about the gas tax –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) a very good job.

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) a good job.

E. JOYCE: He never did a good of a job.

AN HON. MEMBER: You.

E. JOYCE: Me? I shouldn't have to do a good job when the rankings comes up and the Member over there, the former minister, the minister saying that you didn't do a good enough job. So what do you do, take the rankings that the officials do and just throw it out. The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune thinks you just throw it out; throw out the rankings and you blame it on people over here and you can't even see the rankings.

For God's sake, man, it's people safety. I'm very serious about this, this is safety. It is safety and then when you want to talk about it in terms of when you use the gas tax and it's used for all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. In some cases it is, no doubt; a lot of cases when it's roads. The last four or five years it hasn't been done that way. It changed. Thrust me, it changed. I can guarantee you that, it changed.

This is one thing I say to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, if you really want to stand up and say that all the people benefit from the gas tax, prove it. Put out the ranking systems and show it: Here's what we need. I can guarantee you one thing and I'll bet right here, right now that we will not see the ranking system before the next election – won't do it.

This is what I'm saying about the gas tax is used for the roads here and this is what I'm saying here, the announcements haven't been made, the tenders haven't been put out yet because once the tenders are out, they can start and prepare for the work. The work will not be done –

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

I appreciate the conversation and the questions around this. I'll remind the people who are listening this is a one-line bill, changing and ensuring that the gasoline tax, which is the lowest in the country, remains low for at least the next year.

Chair, the question was how much do we spend a year on roads in the province? Now, I'll remind everyone in this Legislature that the gasoline tax goes into Consolidated Revenue. It doesn't go into a specific fund; it goes to Consolidated Revenue. This year we'll collect – well, this costs \$140.4 million so we'll collect somewhere in the range of \$162 million from gas tax this year. We'll spend, though, about \$265 million in roads this year and I think for next year it's about \$340 million, if memory serves me correctly.

So we do spend a tremendous amount of money on our roads and our infrastructure in the province and rightly so. Members will remember that a couple of years ago, I think when the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune was minister of Transportation, we actually put in a tremendous billion-dollar investment, because we considered what was required by the people of the province in upgrading our roads and making sure that they were paved and well cared for.

Chair, I will just reiterate, it does go to Consolidated Revenues. We do spend more than is collected in gasoline tax, however, that gasoline tax is very helpful in ensuring that we have some of the monies available to upgrade our infrastructure throughout the year.

Thank you.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't want to be repetitive of what my colleague was saying, but I don't think the issue is the fact that we're spending money on roads, it's where the money is being

spent and what roads are getting done, that's the concern that I hear.

It doesn't really impact my district, Mount Pearl, St. John's, we get multi-year capital funding and we look after our own roads, so to speak. Albeit, we do have a couple of provincial roads that sort of meander through that area including Pitts Memorial, which I will say we did have an incident the other day. The overpass by Southlands Boulevard and Richard Nolan Drive, there's actually debris falling from underneath that overpass, concrete, onto the road.

I did have Transportation and Infrastructure up there and one of the comments was, basically, we're at a point now where all those overpasses on Pitts Memorial are 50 years old and they do need to be replaced. So certainly in the short- to medium-term something is going to have to be looked at when it comes to those overpasses where there are literally thousands and thousands of people in traffic every single day passing through there. That has to be on the priority list.

I just want to very quickly go back, because I think it's important to note – we all realize this – every time you reduce a tax, that's less revenue that's available to the provincial government to spend on things like health care and so on and it is, as the Minister of Finance says, a balancing act. I do agree with her there that it is a balancing act because if there's no revenue coming in, you can't spend it unless you're going to be borrowing and then, we're going to be going deeper and deeper into the hole.

I think we would all acknowledge we're pretty deep in the hole and I think a lot of people would actually say that we should be making a greater effort to dig our way out of that hole as opposed to year-over-year deficits. With that said, there is one way that we could derive a little bit of revenue for our roads. It's not the gas tax but it was referenced earlier, and that's the Come by

Chance tax, I'm going to call it, that five cents.

I did hear one of my colleagues, I'm not sure if it was the Member for Terra Nova or CBS, one of them said: In case you didn't know it, they had a hearing, and the PUB is done with it and that's here to stay. Somebody said that. But the PUB can make recommendations on all this kind of stuff, of course. I don't think there's anything to prevent because I believe someone said that five cents a litre is what they're calling a storage fee or whatever it is.

We never, ever had it before; it never existed. It was only put in place when Come by Chance went on warm idle and so on. Irving and Esso never did get it but when North Atlantic benefited from it, they asked for it, then, all of a sudden Irving and Esso who had never got it before, nothing changed for them except they got that extra five cents. Now, they all have the five cents, and we have to pay that five cents.

Given the fact that there are some jurisdictions that apparently don't have this storage fee, then regardless of whatever the PUB, whether they bought into it or agreed with it or went along with it or not, I don't think there's anything to stop this government or any government from bringing in legislation, if that's what it needs to be, to say that storage fee will not exist in this province. The PUB can only go by the legislation that currently exists. If there are provinces that have regulations or whatever that say there is no storage fee, then if we changed our regulation to say there will be no storage fee, then that five cents is gone and that five cents that goes back to the consumer, that's not going to cost the government anything in terms of lost revenue.

The only lost revenue is going to be on these big companies that are already making millions, billions in profit. I would say that's a good place to start to supplement, perhaps, what you're doing. Perhaps

whether it's supplement, replace, whatever the case might be, there's five cent a litre, I say to the Minister of Finance that I really – I'm no expert on how all this works, it may not be as simple as that, but I would certainly pose that question to the legal department within the province, Department of Justice or whatever to say can we simply make a legislative change or change to the regulations, if that's what it is, to simply say that this five cent storage fee, there will no storage fee in Newfoundland and Labrador, no different than is in certain other jurisdictions and let's get rid of that five cents.

The will is there to do it; we can do it. I really don't think that Esso and Irving and North Atlantic are going to pull out of Newfoundland because of that five cents. That's just more gravy and I don't want to sound too much like my colleagues from the NDP, but – sorry, I didn't mean that in a disrespectful way, but I can say now, I didn't really mean it that way – but the truth of the matter is, that sometimes we're playing games with these numbers trying to look at ways to cut costs to citizens but at the same time we're trying to find money for services and all that kind of stuff and we do have some of these big companies, we do have the banks and all that, that are making millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars in huge profits, huge profits, quarter over quarter over quarter and every time we're running into a problem with our citizens on affordability or anything else, first thing we're looking at is okay, what are we going to cut? We're going to have to try to cut taxes here and there and then we don't have enough revenue to pay the bills, and we go deeper into debt.

So, you know, they're not totally wrong. I don't necessarily subscribe to everything they say, but they're not totally wrong on some of these things in my opinion. This is one idea, I'll just say, Minister, I'll just throw out there: Have Justice or whoever have a look, see if there's a way that the regulation could be changed so that that five cents

goes back into the pocket of consumers and not costing the government one dime to do it. These big companies are going to stay here anyway. Do you know why? Because they're still going to make millions and millions and millions of dollars in profit regardless.

Thank you.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 106 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 106 carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 106 carried without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 106 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

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