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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to raise an issue of contempt of the House of Assembly. Given that yesterday you ruled comments made by the Minister of Energy were unparliamentary, it now raises an issue of what are the consequences of posting a video clip of the House of Assembly broadcast online with those exact unparliamentary comments for everybody to see.

Now, when you make a ruling and they're withdrawn, of course, *Hansard* shows that record but the online record does not show that those comments have been withdrawn, so that's a concern. While I recognize the Speaker doesn't have authority over a Member's independent speech outside the Chamber, the House of Assembly does exercise absolute jurisdiction over its own broadcast signal, video footage and assets. The question now is whether using a video clip of unparliamentary conduct outside the House of Assembly crosses the line into a misuse of parliamentary property and a violation of the House broadcast guidelines.

In reference to the House of Commons, they have broadcast guidelines that explicitly state that footage cannot be used to demean the House, its institutions or its Members, to question, impeach or bring the dignity of parliamentary proceedings into disrepute or in a distorted or inaccurate context.

Again, with regard to the House of Commons, if a Member takes an official clip of himself during an unparliamentary insult being reprimanded or causing disorder and then post it to social media to glorify the

behaviour or double-down on the attack, they are violating the terms of use of the House broadcast. The House explicitly retains the right to find any user, including a Member of Parliament, in contempt of Parliament for breaching these conditions.

Here in the House of Assembly, we have a Members' Parliamentary Guide which refers to the statement on use and copyright of audio and video clips. The Copyright & Privacy Statement: Publications and Proceeding of the House of Assembly Newfoundland and Labrador, say that restrictions apply to the use of the broadcast assets including, similar to the House of Commons, audio/visual program material may not be used in any form of undignified association.

Given that you've already ruled this language is unparliamentary, I would suggest that posting it continues to bring undignified association to the House of Assembly.

Importantly, the Copyright & Privacy Statement says: "Breach of these restrictions may be considered contempt of the House of Assembly." Speaker, these are words that are written within the Copyright & Privacy Statement itself.

I submit there was a breach by the Minister of Energy by posting this online and therefore contempt of the House of Assembly.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I think what the Member is suggesting is probably that the House of Assembly needs to review every Members' Facebook page historically and do a comparison to each and every single ruling that has ever been made to make sure that Members are not in contempt.

There was no intent there, but we all know that there have been videos posted by multiple people inside of this House, either of themselves talking, or of others, or I would argue that the omission of the second part of a question asked would be a violation very similar to what he is suggesting here.

The utilization of videos on Facebook or any other social media is a very slippery slope and if we're going to start gagging people and looking at what we're doing from a freedom of speech standpoint, it's a much larger discussion than whether or not someone is in contempt.

There have been multiple, multiple examples of times when people have stood on their feet and the whole story has not been told, or parts of it, or there has been edited videos that we have seen. As a matter of fact, I sent one to the leader a few weeks ago after there was a discussion saying that it's something that they would never do and it was proven that they did it.

So, at the end of the day, I recognize the concern here, but it's a much larger concern than just one action. It has to be a holistic action that affects all Members in the House and, if we go down that road, we better be prepared for what the end result is.

SPEAKER: Social media continues to be an issue that we're trying to grapple with in this House of Assembly. I've raised the issue on a number of occasions. I will take the matters that have been brought forward and consider them and provide a ruling at a later time.

With that said, I do caution Members when it comes to the use of social media, as I've said, it's something that we have raised on a number of occasions. It's certainly something that, as I've indicated, I'll be writing the Privileges and Elections Committee to look at that whole issue more holistically in terms of Code of Conduct violations and so on and to consider

whether that's not something we should do in the future.

As I've said, for now on this specific point, I will consider it and rule at a later time.

Thank you.

Visiting our public gallery are members of the Mount Pearl Kinsmen Club, which will be the subject of a Member's statement today.

Welcome to Roy Locke, president; Marc Williams; Brian Jensen; Clayton Button; Larry Hookey and Con Milmore. They're accompanied by Warrant Officer Samuel Bungay and Lieutenant Aaron Norris of the 807 Mount Pearl Kinsman Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron.

Welcome to our Chamber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear Member statements from the Member for the Districts of Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize and thank the dedicated volunteer fire department and first responders of Change Islands, whose commitment and service are truly the backbone of their community.

In small communities like Change Islands, volunteers are not simply helpers, they are essential. These individuals give freely of their time, often at great personal sacrifice,

to ensure their neighbours are safe in times of emergency. Their dedication, courage and selflessness deserve to be acknowledged and celebrated.

At this year's 53rd annual fireman's ball, several long-serving members and fireette volunteers were honoured for decades of service. From 10, 30, 35 and 40 years of commitment, to a remarkable milestone of 50 years of service. These awards reflect a lifetime spent answering the call when it mattered most. The firettes, whose unwavering contributions have supported the department for generations, also received well-earned recognition for their years of service.

I ask all Members to congratulate those who were honoured and extend a sincere thank you to every firefighter, first responder and volunteer in Change Islands. Your dedication makes our communities safer, stronger and more resilient and your service does not go unnoticed.

Thank you for all that you do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Speaker, sports in our schools play a vital role in student development. Today, I recognize and congratulate the Bay d'Espoir Academy senior boys varsity basketball team for reaching an elite milestone during the 2025-2026 season.

Following tournament victories at the Riverwood and PharmaChoice Invitational, along with capturing the SSNL Qualifier Championship, the team went undefeated at the Provincial A Championships in Conne River. With this remarkable achievement, they have secured back-to-back Provincial Championships, following their AA Provincial title during the 2024-2025 school year.

Special recognition goes to Noah Willcott, who was named tournament MVP at both the SSNL Qualifier and the Provincial Championship and to Dixon Stoodley, who earned the Most Sportsmanlike Player award at the provincials.

These young athletes have represented their school and the Coast of Bays region with tremendous pride, dedication and sportsmanship. Their commitment both on and off the court has brought great honour to their school, families and communities. Their success is a testament to hard work, teamwork and perseverance, and they are truly deserving of recognition at the provincial level.

Please join me in congratulating the Bay d'Espoir Academy senior boys' varsity basketball team and their coaches, Michael Hughes, Daniel Pond and Paul Staeben.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand to congratulate Dawson Mercer on being selected to represent Team Canada at the IIHF World Championship.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: From Bay Roberts to the bright lights of the NHL with the New Jersey Devils, Dawson has continued to make Newfoundland and Labrador proud through his hard work, determination and outstanding talent. His success at the highest level of hockey, which includes 20 goals and 22 assists this season, is a testament not only to his skill, but also to the strong hockey culture that exists throughout our great province.

What makes Dawson especially admirable is the way he continues to give back to the local hockey here at home, inspiring young players and supporting the next generation of athletes across Newfoundland and Labrador. He remains a tremendous role model for young people who dream of one day following in his footsteps.

Today, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians share in the pride of seeing one of our own wear the maple leaf – not the Toronto Maple Leaf, but the maple leaf – on the international stage. We wish Dawson and Team Canada every success at the World Championships. Speaker, currently, Canada is 3-0 in the tournament; of course, they're playing Norway right now.

And a big shout-out to Alex Newhook and the Montreal Canadiens as they take on the Carolina Hurricanes tonight.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Speaker, I rise today to recognize one of the longest serving service groups in my district.

Sixty years ago, the Mount Pearl Kinsmen received its charter and began its work serving the communities. The Kinsmen were instrumental in organizing some of the first sports groups in Mount Pearl.

Kinsman Ed Moyst started the Mount Pearl Soccer Association. They built St. David's Field, which has been the centre of activities for many city events, including Remembrance Day ceremonies. The Mount Pearl Kinettes are the only service group in Mount Pearl that was named to the Mount Pearl Hall of Fame. They host Citizen of the Year for many, many years, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local

charities and, for years, they sponsored the Air Cadet Program.

Over the past 60 years, the Mount Pearl Kinsmen have contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to our community. By doing so, they have volunteered thousands of hours to our community, especially to our seniors.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Mount Pearl Kinsmen Club for 60 years of service to our community's greatest needs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I know I'm biased, but I'm going to give that one a hear, hear.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today I rise to provide an update on the Special Assistance Grant Program and to highlight the vital support it delivers to communities around our province.

This program provides emergency financial aid to municipalities, Local Service Districts and non-profit community organizations. It helps address urgent, real-world issues related to health, life safety, critical infrastructure repairs, unexpected financial pressures and special projects.

Last year, my Department of Municipal and Community Affairs received nearly 190 applications through the Special Assistance Grant Program. Each one represents a community facing an emergency situation and looking for timely support.

This is a community-driven program. Applications are acknowledged quickly and reviewed very carefully, so decisions are fair, fiscally responsible and grounded in community need, where it should be.

Speaker, through *Budget 2026: Opportunity For All of Us*, our government and this Premier is investing more than \$200 million in key funding initiatives that directly support local governments and residents. That includes the Special Assistance Grant Program, Provincial Gas Tax Sharing Program, the federal Build Communities Strong Fund, Municipal Capital Works, Municipal Operating Grants and the Community Enhancement Employment Program.

Together, these investments are helping our communities stay strong, respond to challenges and plan for the future. They are building safer, more resilient communities and a more prosperous and sustainable future for people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, for all of us.

Thank you, Speaker,

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Speaker, we welcome any investment that helps municipalities meet their urgent needs and the Special Assistance Grant Program has long been a lifeline for communities facing unexpected pressures. If anything, this update shows just how essential this program has become.

With so much strain on local governments, municipalities are still dealing with aging infrastructure, rising costs and growing service demands. Communities need assurance that this support will not only continue but grow in a predictable, sustainable way. If government truly wants to help municipalities stay strong, then this

program must evolve from emergency relief to a stable, long-term funding pillar.

Recent changes to Multi-Year Capital Works will only cause increased pressure on such emergency funding. Our towns and cities deserve the confidence that when challenges arise, whether economic, environmental or infrastructure related, the province will be there with reliable support and not just temporary measures.

We urge government to build on this program, strengthen it and ensure municipalities have the tools they need, not just to respond to crisis, but to plan for the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

Municipalities have been chronically underfunded for decades. They have infrastructure deficits, lack access to clean water and are constantly expected to do more with less. That is why the need for these grants is so great.

To tackle these systemic issues, government must actually invest more in greater supports in financial assistance programs for municipalities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier initially delayed releasing the review panel report so his hand-picked panellists could speak. He then changed his mind and said they would not be speaking publicly. Now we've heard excuses that they could be seen as modifying the official report if they spoke.

Why are we hearing excuses now – from the media not the Premier, I might add – after the fact? Why can't the Premier pick a story and stick to it?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the only excuse here is that this Liberal government tried to push through an MOU that would have cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador and set us back for another 50 years, just like the 1969 agreement. They should be ashamed of themselves for not talking about the challenges that were in the MOU.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: The report has clearly outlined that this MOU was flawed, and they should be worried about how we fix it. That's right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, why does the Premier's hand-picked panel have such little faith in themselves that they worry so easily that they'll slip up if they talk about and undermine their own report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let's talk about slip-ups.

Was it a slip-up that the Leader of the Opposition and Cabinet allowed a 2 per cent escalation clause to be included in the MOU that would have cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador more than \$30 billion potentially, when it was not recommended by their own financial advisors, when it was not recommended by their own negotiators?

I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Why did you vote for that? Why did you put that in the MOU?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, are the panelists afraid to speak because they may have to disclose information that, perhaps, hasn't made it into the secret report?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, if the Opposition had spent half as much time being concerned about what was in the MOU before the Independent Review came out, perhaps we would have had all the answers done and (inaudible) showed up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Let me refer you to page 21 of the report. The combination of misaligned amortization and power purchase agreement periods and the proposed pricing model leaves unpaid debt,

dividend and equity balances at the end of the 50-year PP contract.

Did the Members opposite know of those critical flaws in their MOU? Did they know about them?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, that's great information. Unfortunately, we don't know where that information came from because the report refers to vague – quote, unquote – experts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: If the report will not name them or make them available, how can Newfoundlanders and Labradorians trust that these aren't armchair Facebook experts instead of world-renowned subject matter experts like we engaged and made available in this House of Assembly?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I go back, again, did the Members opposite, as a Cabinet, turn around and vote to include a 2 per cent escalation clause in their contract, that's in the MOU, that would have resulted in a potential \$30 billion of increased debt for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Did they know when they voted for the MOU, that Quebec would be the –

J. KORAB: That's shocking.

SPEAKER: I ask the Member for Waterford Valley for your co-operation.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Did they know when they turned around and signed this MOU, voted for this MOU, that Quebec was going to be the only customer we would have, again, for another 50 years, just like 1969?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

We've also been told the Premier is worried the panellists – and I quote – could inadvertently disclose commercially sensitive information.

I remind everyone in the House here now, that during the MOU debate, our invited guests could decline to answer questions which are commercially sensitive, subject to Cabinet confidence or solicitor/client privilege or otherwise excepted from disclosure under ATIPP.

So why doesn't the Premier and the panel recognize that they can still speak and protect sensitive information at the same time?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, lets talk about information. Let's talk information. Let's talk about the fact that –

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I ask the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville for your co-operation.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Let's talk about the fact that mining in the Province of Quebec, in the Labrador Trough area, has gone up by 125 per cent, while mining on the Labrador side of that same Trough has only gone up by 45 per cent. Why? Because

Quebec had the power and we saw there was going to be a lack of power available to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador after 2041 to develop our own resources.

We're committed to making sure we get more power, more value and more transmission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I thought he was going to say more transparency, but it was more transmission because we know we're not getting more transparency.

During the MOU debate, the now Premier took issue with an exclusivity clause in the MOU which provided the time frame to negotiate only with Hydro-Québec.

Given the Premier's stance then, will he confirm he will maintain his position and there will be no exclusivity clause if he signs a new deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I can confirm is that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will not be bound by simply having to sell power to one person like the Province of Quebec for the next 50 years. That's one of the things we've talked about that we need to negotiate.

We knew we'd need more customers, but we also need to be able to develop our own industries. That's why we're going to look at an economic benefit analysis that doesn't just look at who we're selling power to or how much money we're getting from selling the power, we want to use the power to develop our own industries right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, incredibly troubling that the Premier can't even commit to his own words which he said on the House of Assembly floor.

Let's look at some other things he said during the debate. He took issue with – in his own words – Hydro-Québec having “control over the development ... for the Gull Island project and the Upper Churchill expansion.”

Let's try this: Will the Premier confirm he will maintain his position that NL Hydro will have full control of the development of projects on the Churchill River?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what I can guarantee. I can guarantee the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that they have this Premier negotiating the contract and not the previous Premier.

Anyone who comes into this House of Assembly and asks questions like this and expects a government or anyone else to negotiate openly and publicly and still have some kind of strong leg to stand on when it comes to negotiating, certainly a lawyer who knows the difference, the questions he's asking make no sense.

We will negotiate the best deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They voted to give it away. In 1969, Joey gave it away. In 1990s, Tobin gave away the veto and these guys just tried to give away the Upper Churchill all over again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Also during the MOU debate, the Premier now took issue with – in his words – Quebec having a share of the ownership of both the existing Churchill Falls development and the expansion plan under this MOU, plus Quebec will have ownership of a world-class asset, Gull Island.

Will the Premier confirm – we already know the answer, he won't – that he will maintain his position that Hydro-Québec will have no ownership of Gull Island?

I say to the Minister of Energy, this is telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians what the Premier and the government's position is on these negotiations and, big surprise, we haven't heard it since January 2025 and we haven't heard it yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs for your co-operation.

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I'll go back again and say the Member for Windsor Lake sat on the LeBlanc inquiry. He knows how this works. There were three different models discussed there. He's misleading when he stands and says what he just said.

The reality of it is that Gull Island, CF1 and CF2 are three entirely different things and the water management was. These guys tried to put it all in one brown paper bag and give it away again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

On day one of the election, the now Premier committed to a referendum. Yesterday, when pressed on *Power & Politics* by David Cochrane, the Premier wouldn't commit. In fact, Cochrane noted that the Premier's answer was – and I quote – a bit of a dodge and that the Premier looks like – I quote – he just said it to get it off the table during the campaign. Then the Premier is – I quote – trying to get out of the referendum promise.

Will the Premier commit today to the referendum or will he continue to dodge the question?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I find it amazing that they want to put the cart before the horse. We've got to turn around and get a deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the first priority here because we know now clearly that the MOU that this former government were prepared to put Newfoundland and Labrador and handcuff us for another 50 years into the same deal as the 1969 deal, and we would've been stuck with it.

Imagine – imagine the fact that they introduced a clause that their negotiator said do not put in it, and they put it in, a 2 per cent clause that would have cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador almost \$30 billion. They had a clause that would have allowed Quebec to control our river, once again, for another 50 years.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I actually did get an answer to that question, which was will he continue to dodge the question? The answer to that is clearly yes.

The Premier pointed yesterday to the federal government's interest in the MOU as a new development, but the Premier failed to acknowledge it was our government that successfully got it on Prime Minister Carney's list of nation-building projects last September.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Will the Premier admit that it was the Liberals that moved this project forward at the federal level and he hasn't moved it forward at all?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what we can say is that we had a government who was prepared to sell our river, who was prepared to give the river back to Quebec for another 50 years; that we would not have enough power to develop our own industry; that we would not be allowed to transmit our power through Quebec again; and we certainly weren't going to get the value that we ought to have gotten from our own resources.

I will guarantee the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we will get more value, we will get more transmission and we certainly will develop the Churchill Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Speaker, earlier this month, we asked the question regarding a woman who has been suffering from lockjaw. The minister said she would look into it, but the patient is now back at the beginning, to navigate the layers and layers of red tape, which are preventing her from getting the life-saving surgery that she needs. This individual is in the gallery today.

I ask the minister to tell her directly why it's taken so long and it's preventing her from receiving the life-saving care that she needs today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

When patients run into issues, it's very, very important for us to be able to support them, Speaker. In actual fact, some issues have come forward. I was aware of an issue in November; myself and my deputy minister actually addressed the issue. We didn't hear any more of it until in April – in actual fact, late April.

Speaker, we are aware of it. We're working with the issue. The thing is we reached out to the patient. We are supporting the patient. What we found are there are several layers and the patient is having trouble navigating and we're going to help the patient navigate. We will make sure this patient is looked after.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Speaker, on March 20, the Minister of Education announced he will develop a steering committee that will make recommendations regarding changes and benefit improvements for early childhood educators.

It's been two months. Have you established your committee, Minister, and can you provide the House with an update?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you for the question – a very good question and a very serious question, given the state of our early child care in this province.

I did announce that, but I also announced in the coming months. In the coming weeks, you can expect to see the early child care steering committee developed. We have taken the applications. We have already assessed them. We have names recommended to go on that committee.

So, in the coming weeks, you should hear on that a little bit more. We will get that committee down to work, and we will be doing the same with the provincial advisory committee on early child care education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: We certainly agree, this is very important. It's important to get it moving as quickly as possible.

Speaker, next week is Early Childhood Educators Week – a week that celebrates the commitment and dedication of our highly skilled ECEs.

Will the minister admit that leaving ECEs out of the budget was a mistake and reconsider making improvements to the compensation and benefits of the ECEs that enrich the lives of children and families right across Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, and that is a good question. We value our early child care educators and, as I said, part of what they wanted, Child Care Now nationally, was to have a committee in place to formally address these issues around wages, compensation and benefits.

This is what we have in place in the coming weeks. We will be sitting down with these groups and working through that. We have it in our blue book. It is a commitment to address pensions and wages as we move forward.

That will be a commitment that we will follow through on, but we want to talk to the sectors, the industry, and find out where they want to prioritize that list in moving forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Just to remind the minister, benefits were the priority and that's the area in which they want to move.

The Conservative blue book said there is a crisis facing students in classrooms. It promised to expand school meals for K-to-12 students, hire and retain more teachers, reduce class sizes and improve students' access to school psychologists; but the

Conservative budget book addresses none of these commitments.

If the Conservatives believe that our public education is in crisis, why isn't there more in the budget for education?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Just to the brief preamble, the issue around early child care and the requirements they need on pensions, it hasn't been determined which is their top priority. That's what we're going to work through. I've actually got a call from YWCA on that. They're looking forward to having those discussions.

To your question on the budget, \$1.5 billion is in the budget for education; \$400 million for Memorial University; more than \$32.6 million will be invested to address continuation of child care. The budget for educators and learning assistants –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

The federal government's involvement in expanding Churchill Falls and developing Gull Island is only held up by the Premier's inability to reach a deal. Now the Parti Québécois Energy critic says Ottawa's involvement is – quote – out of the question and a threat to Quebec's energy sovereignty.

What is the Premier's plan if the PQ wins the Quebec election in the fall?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I have said many times in this House of Assembly, I stand here on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – and I will stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we will make sure that the MOU that they signed and approved and were ready to move forward that would have handcuffed us for another 50 years will not happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker, and I would remind the Premier that we all stand here on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Yesterday, the Premier told the media that Jerome Kennedy and the negotiating team started analysis two weeks ago and will start the negotiation in a couple of weeks, soon.

The Premier secretly hired Mr. Kennedy four months ago, and given that they've offered no transparency on cost or scope, we have to ask what has Mr. Kennedy been doing behind closed doors for the past four months?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I am very proud to have Mr. Kennedy as a member of the negotiating team.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: I don't have to validate the work that Mr. Kennedy has done, and I can assure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, he's providing great service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in his current role.

What I'd like to ask the Member opposite: Where were you? Did you vote for that 2 per cent escalation clause that would have cost the people of Newfoundland and Labrador \$30 billion? Did you vote for the MOU? Were you aware of that clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Premier and the House of Assembly that back when Jerome Kennedy was the Natural Resources minister, he said that Muskrat Falls is a project that would pay for itself. So his track record on hydroelectric projects, not exactly stellar.

Speaker, former Premier Danny Williams said, in April, "it's probably the single biggest achievement I've had since I've been in politics, which is stopping that MOU." He said that in a media scrum. Yesterday, Mr. Williams said, "I didn't kill the MOU," and claimed he has had no involvement.

Since Danny Williams won't decide, will the Premier confirm whether he was wrong last month or is he wrong now?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I would say when the wannabe leader of the Opposition has a question like that, he should understand that we have surrounded ourselves with the very best people. We have not turned comments off anywhere. We have listened to anyone and everyone who can provide solid advice.

We certainly didn't try to give away the province again, for the third time, as the Liberals have repeated – '69, it was Joey; in the '90s, it was Tobin; and now it's a reincarnation of Joey's Liberals over there trying to give it back to Quebec.

They come in here and they're more concerned about –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – Quebec's stance than they are about our own. We are going to negotiate a deal that adds more value, more transmission and allows us to be in charge of our own –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Speaker, I say to the minister opposite, if he feels so great to have the people who architected \$13 billion for the ratepayers of this province, they're on the hook for – a Member earlier said thank God; I'll say God help us.

While we are pleased to see changes to the food fishery in the province, the residents of the South and West Coast are frustrated and angered by the decision to only have three days a week to participate.

I ask the Premier: What is he doing to support the residents in my district, his

district and all those excluded from the seven days a week change for a fair and safe food fishery?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd be remiss if I didn't address the preamble. There are a few facts that these guys always overlook. Let's go to the first one. There would be no discussion about Gull Island today if Muskrat Falls did not exist, period. The only way Gull Island can be built is because of Muskrat Falls existence – fact one.

Fact two, these guys failed to deliver on Muskrat Falls. When they took over in 2015, if it was such a bad idea, they could have shut it down. They could have shut it down in '16. They could have shut it down –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – in '17. They could have shut it down in '18.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: As a matter of fact, in 2017, they came into this House of Assembly and said the project was 78 per cent complete and it didn't get commissioned until 2022.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I've heard the Minister of Energy say this now, that it was important

for Muskrat Falls to go before Gull Island, but the fact is Danny Williams initiated the Lower Churchill Project with a focus on developing Gull Island first. But the strategy shifted to Muskrat Falls as the initial phase in 2010.

While Gull Island was considered more economical, Muskrat Falls was chosen as a smaller, more manageable starter project to allow Newfoundland and Labrador to go it alone and avoid relying on Hydro-Québec.

I ask the Minister of Energy: Is Danny Williams right, or he right?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to get up and be a Member for the District of Ferryland and speak on the fishery and our government here, as well, have certainly spoken well on the cod fishery. I've met with the federal minister three times on the food fishery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We've made some changes to the food fishery this year as well. We'd like to see some more changes and we certainly will be reaching out to the minister to check on that as well for the West Coast.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: I'll say to the minister opposite, the government was very quick to pat themselves on the back for an announcement from the federal government, but it was the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who advocated for years to see this change and they are the ones to be thanked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: I'll say to the minister opposite, will the minister admit that they failed to deliver for all of us in Newfoundland and Labrador for a fair and safe food fishery?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

We had a PMR in here last week that everybody voted to agree that the fishery is certainly important for the whole Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I met with the minister, as I said, three times over the past six months and the first topic of conversation was the food fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

They did make some changes. Again, I will be forwarding a letter to the minister to see more changes for the West Coast so they can have everybody fish for seven days a week during the year.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

All this government is clearly about is deflection and secrecy – shameful.

The Conservatives have appointed Keri-Lynn Power to lead the access to information review. While she –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: Are we going to reset the clock? Is the Member going to have respect?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: I will start again, Speaker.

The Conservatives have appointed Keri-Lynn Power to lead the access to information review. While she is an experienced lawyer, she's also a Conservative donor, having donated to the PCs in the past couple of years.

Why did the Conservatives think it was acceptable to appoint a political supporter to review legislation about what information the Conservatives will have to release, or will they keep it all a secret like they're doing with everything else?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Let's have a conversation about donors, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Two hundred and thirty-seven thousand dollars that Chris Hickman gave to this government – \$237,000 – and, in return, he got the opportunity to walk into the Premier's office, seven days a week,

whenever he wanted. You could see his vehicle parked out there in our parking spots.

Not only that, he got \$350 million worth of work from this group over here. Not only did they want to give away Churchill Falls, but they gave away the premiums.

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm asking the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for your co-operation.

The hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy.

L. PARROTT: Not only did they give away Churchill Falls, but they gave away everything else, to the tune where other proponents that were bidding –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Energy and Mines said the Premier had the foresight to understand that the MOU was flawed.

So I ask the Premier: If that was the case, why didn't he and his caucus vote against the deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, right from day one when that announcement was first announced, I said we needed an independent review because we didn't have

enough information about it. We stood in this House and asked for an independent review. It didn't happen. We wrote letters asking for independent experts to come in. That didn't happen.

They turned around and approved a review process that was flawed from the beginning, did not have the ability to ask the questions they needed to ask, were not allowed to ask the people who they needed to ask and, as a result of that, we didn't get it.

We have an independent review done now. I ask the Member opposite: Why did you vote for a flawed MOU?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, we did our job, what we're paid to do, and actually voted (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: The Independent Review Committee noted that a key outcome of the MOU is access to an additional 600 megawatts before 2041, but restricted to 500 megawatts post-2041. Yet, Schedule E of the MOU indicates that there will be an additional 360 megawatts available, bringing the total to 860 megawatts post-2041, not 500.

Since we are not permitted to question the IRC, will the Premier explain why members of the committee ignored the additional power? Was it an oversight on their part, or did they deliberately exclude the information?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

It would have been really good if he had to notice that when the MOU came out, if it was already there. They voted to support this. At the end of the day, we have one individual on the panel who walked away right after this gentleman over here became the premier and their terms of reference changed.

They actually voted – the whole Cabinet voted – that individual in, now he's no good. They and him supported every part of this along the way and, here we are today, and their largest concern is that.

We, even with that power, do not have enough power to develop Labrador. That is why we are going for more power, and we will get it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: The minister, obviously, hasn't been speaking to the people of Labrador, that's for sure.

Speaker, the report of the Review Committee states that Gull Island is one of the best undeveloped hydroelectric power generation opportunities on the continent and a valuable opportunity for the province.

So I ask the Premier: Was his Independent Review Committee simply a thinly veiled justification for his government to develop Gull Island on its own and risk another Muskrat Falls debacle?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Again, I would say that the Member opposite should do some research because Gull Island isn't one of the best, it

is the best undeveloped resource in North America by far.

We know we want to develop Labrador. These Members haven't taken into consideration Tacora, Kami, Rio Tinto, Iron Bear, Tata –

S. STOODLEY: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: No, they didn't.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Mount Scio for your co-operation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. PARROTT: The \$8.5 billion spent.

I would say to the Member opposite that's over there chirping, perhaps she should go back and look at what they put forward because none of them were in what they put forward. They were going to give us 10 million person-hours of work when it's 10 times that amount. They didn't know what they were doing.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, the independent review panellists received legal advice not to speak to the public about their findings.

I ask the Premier: Which lawyers gave this advice, was it the two that were secretly hired back in January; the former premier, Danny Williams, or their own government lawyers? Who was it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Once again, Speaker, once again, the focus is not on the MOU, where it ought to be focused because that Party over there voted in favour of an MOU that included a 2 per cent escalation clause that was not recommended by the financial advisors, was not recommended by their negotiating team and would have cost this province, potentially, \$30 billion of extra debt.

I ask the Member opposite: Why did your Party support that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise on a point of order, section 49.

I note that during Question Period, the Minister of Energy and Mines referred to the Opposition House Leader as misleading the public. This House has found on numerous occasions that misleading is not parliamentary when it applies to a person.

I ask the minister to withdraw the comment and to commit to not posting and doubling down on social media.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will remind the Member opposite that the previous minister of Finance used to stand

in this House on a daily basis and say you have either mislead or were misleading. It was ruled on numerous times that it was not, in fact, unparliamentary.

If I said the word misleading, it was because we were, indeed, being misled.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The term misleading I would say depends on the context, if it's directed toward a specific person versus being spoken in general. I never heard the exact words, so I will review the tapes and *Hansard* and I will rule on it at a later time.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 25, 2026.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 2026.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following: That, notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, but shall continue to sit for the conduct of Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2026.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: A petition, repairs and paving, Route 220. These are the reasons for the background of this petition:

WHEREAS Phase 4 of Route 220, St. Lawernce to Salmonier Bridge, was scheduled to be completed this year; and

WHEREAS this is one of the busiest sections of highway on the Burin Peninsula; and

WHEREAS this section of highway is currently in deplorable condition with many dangerous areas causing unsafe situations and damages to vehicles; and

WHEREAS Route 220 is the lifeline for emergency vehicles and residents getting to hospitals; and

WHEREAS residents in this area use Route 220 to avail of services such as hospitals, groceries, employment, banking and others.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase its road budget to address some real problems in the District of Burin - Grand Bank. We ask to have officials and engineers verify the condition of this highway and have it repaired and repaved in this construction season to ensure safety for our residents.

Mr. Speaker, this section of highway, like I said, is located on Route 220 and it was Phase 4. We did the other three phases, but this is really a bad section of highway. I have personally, on many occasions – not just one or two, but many – witnessed residents losing their tires, rims and so on, with no recourse because they can't make a claim to government for those damages.

As with other communities – and it's very important that I note this – all of our services are in Marystown, which is the hub of the area, so we need to get there for pretty much everything.

Again, I'll extend an invitation to the minister to visit my region, to visit the district with his officials to see first-hand some of the issues that I have brought forward.

Speaker, I know that I'm constantly getting up on roads here, but do you know something? When I get up, I don't get up for me, I get up for the constituents that live in my district.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I have here a petition to teach and celebrate Black history in Newfoundland and Labrador.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Black history is an integral part of Canada's history, one to which Newfoundland and Labrador, as a province, is connected to; and

Black History Month and Black History, as a whole, are subjects that are missing in the curriculum of the Newfoundland and Labrador English and French school systems; and

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not only unaware of their connection to this proud history but also the impact that numerous Black people and Black Canadians have had on the history of the world; and

Education is a pivotal step in breaking down a system of institutional racism and prejudice, leading to the creation of an equitable society that supports all its citizens, especially those of colour;

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to amend the school curriculum to include Black History and celebrate Black History Month in their classrooms.

Speaker, when I was growing up, and maybe there are people of my generation who remember the Ginn series of books. It was an American anthology of plays and everything else, but it was through this that we had an introduction to the Black authors such as Dick Gregory and Langston Hughes and exposure to the civil rights movement in the US.

It was always that sense that this was something in our country to the south and we can see what's happening there today with regard to the redistricting of electoral districts. In Newfoundland, we probably figured we were not part of that. We were. I can think of the fact that when you look at the North Atlantic Triangle trade, it was connected to the slave trade, tangentially, for sure.

We also know that we also have the history of Lanier Phillips on the Burin Peninsula and his experience as a Black sailor and how well he was treated. Let us not forget that there is an element of – we can see it in the anti-immigration, anti-newcomer and anti-Black racism that is here.

I think, rather than wait until it becomes a problem, a major problem, it's an opportunity here to bring this as part of our educational curriculum and make sure that we get ahead of this. I do believe that Newfoundland and Labrador is a welcoming place and that's what we base our pride on.

Let's make sure that we find ways to bring awareness to the issues facing those of colour in our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

P. DINN: Thank you, and I thank the Member for the petition.

It's an extremely, extremely important item to be talking about. We pride ourselves, in this province, as being welcoming. Unfortunately, we come across instances where that's not happening and it's paramount on us, all of us, but all in our schools, as well, to ensure that our youth are properly educated, properly made

aware of the different people that come to our province.

It actually goes hand in hand with our PMR yesterday, that the Opposition presented, when we talk about social media and the influences on our children, because that certainly plays a big role in that.

I will say that, in the Department of Education, we do regular reviews of curriculum, and this is not something that we're going to ignore. It's something that's very important to our province, to our community, to our children and it's something we will certainly be looking at.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, I'm about to present a petition. Before I do, I'd just like to thank Minister Petten with Transportation and Infrastructure for having a conversation about this with me a couple of weeks ago.

These are the reasons for and the background of this petition:

WHEREAS school transportation planning is currently based on a child's home address rather than their after-school destination, despite many parents and guardians, particularly working families, relying on child care arrangements such as licensed daycares, family day homes and after-school programs; and

WHEREAS the absence of bus stops aligned with these after-school destinations creates logistical challenges and financial burdens for families who should not be required to arrange and pay for private transportation, nor should child care providers and small-business operators be expected to absorb these costs; and

WHEREAS courtesy seating is not a viable option in communities where existing bus routes do not services non-residential areas, including child care providers located in commercial zones, and while the government's plan to implement advance registration is a positive step, further action is needed to address these long-standing gaps;

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, in collaboration with the Department of Education, to review and update school transportation policies to allow for bus routing and stop design that considers children's after-school care destinations, including licensed daycares, day homes and after-school programs; ensure that transportation options are accessible and equitable for working families without requiring additional private transportation costs – what the minister and I spoke about, Speaker – include the Town of Gander in the 2026 pilot program for advanced registration for school busing, in order to evaluate and implement improved routing that reflects students' after-school care and needs, including service to non-residential and commercial areas where child care providers are located; establish a designated school bus stop for September 2026 on Roe Avenue that provides direct service to a daycare located in that area, ensuring safe and reliable access for children attending after-school care; and guarantee courtesy seating on an existing route for September 2026 to provide immediate access to transportation from Gander Elementary to the after-school program on Airport Boulevard.

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time has expired.

B. FORD: Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, and I thank the Member for the petition.

It reminds me of the many, many petitions I presented similar to that, almost verbatim, in terms of what I presented over the years talking about the busing.

I work very closely with my colleague, with Transportation and Infrastructure, and I'm very happy that in a short period of time here that we've come in with a pilot project to address the concerns around the child care. It's probably the biggest concern when it comes to this, being able to be picked up where children are dropped off. It affects families and, in many cases, the mother.

The mother is usually the one who's home, ensuring that the child gets to where they need to be. It's a big, big hurdle when you talk about afternoons, when school gets out early and you have one of the parents running to school to try to pick them up and get them to the child care centre.

I'm confident that myself and my colleague with TI will take everything that comes forward and have a good look at it to make sure that it fits in, but it is a start for us. I think it's 17 schools we're looking at. We're moving forward on it, but I'm sure we're open to hearing from other districts if there are issues that are there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Orders of the Day.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a privilege to speak about the budget again. I had a very long speech the first time, so I have lots of material to pull out again. I have 20 minutes now in the amendment and then, towards the end of my speech today, I will have a subamendment which is customary, I understand, for the budget process.

I'm going to have some words to say before I move the subamendment. I think one of the things I'd like to start by focusing on is the MOU and this new report that we got this week, *Creating Long-Term Value from the Churchill River for the People of Newfoundland and Labrador*. A title of a report which I don't think anyone could disagree with that report.

I know it's well documented in *Hansard*, but I'd like to just refresh anyone watching, in terms of why we got here, where we are right now and what's kind of really going on here in my personal opinion, Speaker.

Obviously, under Premier Furey, we put together negotiating teams. I wasn't in the weeds of it. It wasn't my ministerial area. I know Premier Furey really wanted to make the MOU future proof, or inquiry proof, I will say. We had a negotiating team. Before that, there was a lot of work put into what the negotiating team would do.

I would say we had a very professional, competent negotiating team, of which the members are public – a former CEO of Fortis; two of the leaders of Hydro or, if not, the leader of Hydro, a very prominent Newfoundland and Labrador lawyer. I think the general population in Newfoundland and

Labrador felt very confident in them as the negotiating team and the leadership team.

They worked very diligently for probably a year or more, coming up with the MOU. Shortly after, we had the MOU, as was agreed, we had an announcement here at The Rooms. The Quebec government was here and it was a negotiation. Obviously, when you're talking about a negotiation between two hydroelectric organizations, Newfoundland Hydro and Hydro-Québec, or really also Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Quebec, it would be impossible to get a deal that is significantly one-sided. Obviously, both parties, in order to sign a deal, would need something that benefits both parties.

So I do think that's important to consider. Because we do not own 100 per cent of CF(L)Co. Even if we waited until 2041, we do not have control. In 2041, we don't own CF(L)Co. Hydro-Québec still has an important shareholder component of CF(L)Co. Even if we wait until 2041, Quebec still gets a veto in terms of what happens with the Churchill River.

I mean, say right or wrong, the history of that, obviously, that should not have been done that way, but previous governments and people with a lot more experience in that than I do have taken that to court and my understanding is that's kind of a settled issue. The ownership of CF(L)Co, it is what it is.

I think it's important to understand that. Going door to door, so many people said, well, why don't you just wait until 2041? I said: Sure, that's a fair point. We could wait until 2041. Quebec might have moved on by then. They're going to take care of what they need to do. There are other ways to get the power that they need. But also in 2041, Quebec still has a veto for what happens to the Churchill River in 2041.

I think that's an incredibly important point that most people in Newfoundland and

Labrador – not the people who are very well read on this issue, but the average person is not very well read on this issue, in my experience, and they don't understand CF(L)Co and what happens in 2041.

From the Memorandum of Understanding, which has been public since last December, we've brought experts here from J.P. Morgan, Power Advisory and Newfoundland Hydro for four days and nights from 10 a.m. until 9 or 10 every night from Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. At one point, I did the math, it was like 40-something Question Period's worth of time that this House had to ask our experts questions about the deal.

So after that though, that was just the framework, the Memorandum of Understanding. After that, there was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to hear the hon. Member speak.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

After that, there were going to be numerous definitive agreements that still needed to be negotiated. So there were a lot of things far from final from the MOU to getting to a deal. There were many numerous definitive agreements that still needed to be negotiated.

So I think that's very important for people to understand. Interestingly, Members opposite, now they have very strong opinions. We have not heard opinions from the Members opposite since last January. We had a vote in this House. We voted in support of the MOU, which I stand by any day of the week, and the government now walked out and they did not vote in that decision about the MOU.

I think that's extremely important for anyone to be reminded of, Speaker. I also want to

note that our MOU was not a bad deal. I think it's wild that the Minister of Energy refers to it like the original 1969 deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm still trying to hear the hon. Member. I'm finding it very difficult.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I can certainly see, okay, they say they want more energy, fine. I'm not an energy expert, but when I asked the people who are energy experts with the MOU that we had – and I'm sure that came up in the House and I can certainly pull the *Hansard* debates. I haven't done that right now, but I can certainly pull the expert testimony. I'm sure it must have been asked in this House during our four full days, does this deal deliver enough power for Lab City?

When I asked those questions, I was walked through it by the people who do that expert energy analysis. They walked us through on many occasions – and part of that was in this House of Assembly – that it did fulfill the energy requirements.

I think that that's very important, and I do think it's wild that the government is now portraying the MOU, which they were silent on for almost a year – for more than a year – and now it's like Joey Smallwood's deal. That's just wild. If they want to say they want more energy, that's fine. That's their prerogative as the government.

I also want to note, though, at the board of trade speech, we heard the Minister of Finance say they would sign a deal the same or better, and that's great. I commend that, but to portray our deal as the same as

Joey Smallwood's deal is wild and ridiculous, in my opinion.

I think that's important for people to understand. Now we have this report and if you had two groups of people to write a report about something, of course, they're going to find areas where they disagree or they have areas of recommendation. I think that's only natural. I'm surprised it's not worse than it is, considering what the mandate was and the way the government was talking about the MOU.

The government has a new negotiating team. So they have a different former Fortis CEO – because we had an ex-Fortis CEO. They have a different Fortis ex-CEO. They have the same NL Hydro leader, who I have an extreme amount of respect for, and they have a different lawyer. They have a different prominent lawyer. That lawyer was a former Cabinet minister in this House. It smells the same, Speaker. We're not talking about apples and oranges. We're talking about Granny Smith apples and Honeycrisp apples.

I also want to highlight for this House that in the news conference, I find it extremely disrespectful that watching the news conference we heard the Premier list out who was on the negotiating team, which is their prerogative and then, right in the camera, the Premier said I don't care if anyone has any concerns about that. I thought that was wildly disrespectful to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just want to put that on the record that if you want to take your own policy directives, as is your prerogative, you're the government, but to get on your news conference and look at the camera and say I don't care, with a really angry, old man face – come on, seriously.

So I do want –

L. PARROTT: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, article 49 – we just had an individual stand up in this House and refer to the Premier of this province as an old man, who said he went with his angry, old man face – absolutely unbelievable that an individual would be allowed to stand in this House and not only disrespect the position, but the disrespect towards an individual to refer to them as old – to say an old man in this House after the things that we have heard said in here, after some of the questions we have been asked here by some of the Members in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this – there are a couple of things here. The first is, this isn't about a retraction. There has to be a full apology – a full apology – made directly to the Premier. It has to be retracted and I think that perhaps speaking privileges should be taken away right now.

It's absolutely incredible that an individual can stand in this House, given the fact that in the past –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – there has been words used in this House that have been ruled on very diligently, that they have taken out to the media and almost sacrificed people in this House and caused them their jobs. The same individual stands up and refers to someone as an old man. Absolutely shameful, and she's laughing at it over there now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Are you speaking to the point of order?

S. STOODLEY: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I'm asking the Member for Mount Scio, do you wish to speak to the point of order?

S. STOODLEY: I was going to withdraw my statement but I can wait.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I say to both Members, you will not be recognized today, don't even bother to stand to speak.

Now, I'm going to say to the Member for Mount Scio, first of all, do you wish to speak to the point of order?

S. STOODLEY: I would like to say that I unequivocally apologize, I should not have said that. I'm happy to do that whenever the right time is.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you for that.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, given the fact the Member said she will unequivocally apologize, unless you had something you had to –

E. JOYCE: I just want to comment on what the Member said.

SPEAKER: Very quickly. Go ahead.

E. JOYCE: Yes, very quickly.

What the Premier actually said is, if you want to play politics with it, I don't care. That was left out of the preamble when he said, I don't care. That's what the Premier of the province said. I just looked it up again, he said: If they want to play politics, I don't care.

It was no reflection on the debate; it was no reflection on the MOU. It was a reflection on

if people want to play politics with who he appointed to the committee.

I just wanted to clarify that.

SPEAKER: That really doesn't have anything to do with the point of order, per se, but I do appreciate the background.

Again, the Member for Mount Scio has said that she would apologize unequivocally, as was asked.

L. PARROTT: Withdraw.

SPEAKER: She said that she would withdraw and that she would also apologize unequivocally. She said she will wait until the appropriate time when the Premier is here. That's my understanding.

S. STOODLEY: Whenever is appropriate.

SPEAKER: Okay, thank you. I am satisfied with that.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I just have to raise a point that you said speaking privileges have been taken away, but as per *Standing Orders*, I believe that the Member has to be named prior to their speaking privileges being taken away.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: I want to clarify something here now because, quite frankly, with everything that's going on here, I'm a little bit mesmerized. But, yes, the speaking privileges have been removed today from the Government House Leader and for the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. I should not have recognized the Member. That was my mistake but, as we move forward, I will not recognize either of these two Members today. I hope that's crystal clear.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio to continue with the debate.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I apologize; I will apologize again. I should not have said that and I revoke that unequivocally.

I would like to go now to the recommendations of the report, *Creating Long-Term Value from the Churchill River for the People of Newfoundland and Labrador*. I think this is important to understand because we've heard Members of the government say that this is like a 1969 –

SPEAKER: A point of order?

B. PETTEN: Point of order or point of clarification, Speaker.

You can't wait until another time to unequivocally apologize, if you admit your fault. You clearly stated the Member was waiting until the Premier was present. That's not the way it's supposed to work. If you said you done wrong and you're here and you wait for someone to come, you can apologize here. You can apologize in person later, but you made that statement in the House, you can't punt that down the road. That has to be dealt with here and now.

SPEAKER: The Member stood to her feet. The Member said that she apologized unequivocally. She said if you would like for me to also – I'm doing it, if you want me to wait, I will do it when the Premier comes in face-to-face as well, but she has already apologized unequivocally, twice now. Twice she has done it.

B. PETTEN: Respectfully, you are identifying the Premier not being here, which is also wrong.

These riots cannot be happening in the House, Speaker, is what I'm trying to say.

You are looking for control of the House, and I respect that, I'm trying to help you do that. What you're hearing here every day, this is not control of the House, Speaker. This stuff is happening and you, as Speaker, have to get control of this House because it's not looking good to the public and you are the person in charge, Speaker.

There is something wrong. You named the Premier as not being here and that's being passed as accepted.

SPEAKER: I take the Member's comments – you are right, I am in control of this House of Assembly and I will control it, but I do take the point.

Now, I'm going to ask the Member for Mount Scio to continue with the debate. The Member for Mount Scio has stood to her feet; she has said that she apologizes unequivocally – she did say it. She did offer as well to say it again whenever it was convenient for everybody else. She offered to do that, but she has stood in this House and apologized unequivocally. I am satisfied with that.

I am also very disappointed in the constant behaviour that is happening. What happened this afternoon, just recently, was very unacceptable, that's why I have taken away speaking privileges for both Members. I would ask all Members now to govern themselves according in a professional way.

I ask the Member for Mount Scio to please continue with her speaking to the budget.

S. STOFFLEY: Thank you very much.

I'd like to go through the recommendations because I think that's an incredibly valuable thing. We have this report and it's a very important document to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. For anyone who thinks that the MOU is now magically somehow like the 1969 deal, because that's wildly inaccurate, I'd like to read the recommendations.

There are five recommendations from the government's Churchill River Independent Review Committee and I would like to remind everyone that the members of the Review Committee will not be made available. They will not be in the House for us to ask questions to. They will not be made available to the media. They will not be made available in any capacity to answer questions on this report.

I'd also like to note that we're unable to understand whose input was taken into consideration in drafting this report.

This report spoke to many stakeholders and groups and industries we don't know and that list – my understanding – is confidential and it cannot be revealed. I also think the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, generally, does put out a list of who was consulted, which stakeholders, which groups, that's usually a part of how government operates, so I do think it's very strange that this group will not tell us who they consulted with. They won't tell us whose opinions they consulted; what experts, if any.

I'm sure they must have consulted experts because they are reputable individuals but they won't tell us which experts they've consulted so I think that's very important and telling.

I do want to go to the recommendations. It doesn't say this is a 1969 deal. It says: "GNL should determine, based on a comprehensive analysis of long-run economic development options, the extent to which power generation from the Churchill River should provide financial versus economic value to the province over time." I think that's not an unreasonable recommendation and that certainly doesn't say that the MOU that was existing is bad.

Obviously, there's how much power do we use as Newfoundland and Labrador versus how much power do you sell? How much revenue and jobs and industry do we get

versus how much money the Treasury gets? There are pros and cons and risks. That is not an easy question with an easy answer. That is a very complex, weighted decision with a lot of different inputs. I'm sure if you asked 100 people, you'd get 75 different answers.

Sure, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, as it's the government, it's their prerogative to decide how that's balanced and if they want to change the balance, that's their prerogative. That's what the reports are opined on and that is Recommendation 1: "... based on a comprehensive analysis of long-run economic development options, the extent to which power generation from the Churchill River should provide financial versus economic value to the province over time." Sure.

Recommendation 2: "GNL should sanction and support NLH construction of a new transmission line ... between Churchill Falls and Labrador West in order to enable economic growth of the province's energy-intensive industries." Fair. That's not an unreasonable recommendation in my opinion. Lovely. It doesn't say anything about the original deal.

Recommendation 3, also a very valuable and very important recommendation: "GNL and NLH should remain committed to the objective of building respectful relationships with and consulting Indigenous communities in connection with future developments on the Churchill River and in Labrador." That's excellent. So that's an excellent recommendation and I'm very confident in the work that we have done in our discussions and consultation and agreements that were signed with Indigenous communities on the Churchill River and Labrador. But, again, that's an excellent recommendation.

Recommendation 4: "GNL should rigorously evaluate alternative ownership, operating, and right-of-use models for new

hydroelectric generation at Gull Island that are consistent with the province being the primary beneficiary of the financial and economic value created." Sure. There are a lot of different models. I'm sure if you asked five or 10 energy experts, they'd give you different options.

When we were reviewing the MOU, we did indeed, certainly consider and opine on many different options. So I think this is a very fair and reasonable and expected recommendation from this Churchill River Independent Review Committee

Recommendation 5, again, there are only five recommendations in this report. Recommendation 5: "GNL and NLH should prepare for future negotiations with HQ by preparing a fully articulated negotiating strategy and best-practice governance process." Fair. That's fine. There was some comment on the negotiating strategy before. Again, if you look at how MOU and definitive agreements of this magnitude come about, I'm personally very comfortable with the MOU, the negotiating and the framework and the parameters that our government provided our negotiation committee as well as the MOU.

Again, there were multiple – I think it was nine or 10 definitive agreements still to come from the MOU. There was a lot of negotiations still to do. I do think it's not an appropriate characterization to say that the MOU that we had was like the 1969 deal. That is wild.

Speaker, in my five minutes left, I do want to make sure I get in our subamendment to the budget.

I move, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl North, that the amendment previously presented, the non-confidence amendment, be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma and also by adding immediately thereafter the following words: and that this House further faults the PC government for its failure to deliver on its

promise to meet the needs and make changes to support our early childhood educators; its failure to deliver on its promise of supporting the K-to-12 education system; its failure to deliver on its promise to deliver 24-hour snow clearing; its failure to deliver on its promise of delivering topside work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the Bay du Nord project; its failure to deliver on its promise of an MRI machine for the Burin Peninsula; its failure to deliver on its promise for improving access to repairs and safety upgrades for seniors; its failure to deliver on its promise of providing a tax credit for rotational workers; its failure to deliver on its promise of expanding the Physical Activity Tax Credit; its failure to deliver on its promise of providing overhead support and incentives for doctors and nurse practitioners; and its failure to deliver on its promise of real transparency for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So that is our subamendment, Speaker, and we have copies.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: We will now take a brief recess to consider the subamendment.

Recess

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

I've considered the amendment and find it to be in order.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Now, we're talking about the subamendment. I read that out and I think this gives an excellent opportunity to talk about some of the things that I know have been already mentioned in the House, but when we think back to the election and think about when someone knocked on our door – if you're watching – and what they

promised you they would deliver when they knocked on your door and what's being delivered in this budget, I think is important for people to keep in mind.

We think about early childhood educators and we heard today, already in this House, that next week is Early Childhood Educator Week. The government mandate clearly talks about pensions for early childhood educators and it estimates – although, I would argue it estimates way too little amount of money for early childhood educator pensions, but that is clearly in the government mandate, which is not in the budget this year.

I'd also like to talk about the 24-hour snow clearing that was in our amendment. The government promised 24-hour snow clearing. Fair. It's been a very difficult winter. Then they came out and said that people had too high expectations. Then they said they delivered their promise. So I think that's important to remember that it was a difficult winter but they said, promised kept, promised delivered. Then people's expectations were too high. I think it is tricky.

Then the government promised topside for the Bay du Nord Project. They promised that all topsides would be built in Newfoundland and Labrador. Now we see with the Bay du Nord Project and the Bay du Nord agreement, which I'm still working through. I have it at home. I started going through it with a fine-tooth comb and every few paragraphs I have to go down a rabbit hole of additional research, but they promised topside work and that is not something that's being delivered.

Instead, they are getting \$200 million from Equinor – at some point, there is a date in the future, it's not this year or next year, at some point in the future – towards a dry dock, but we don't know how big the dry dock is going to be. We don't know what work is going to happen in the dry dock. We don't know anything. Who's going to run the

dry dock? This is like kind of a huge unknown. We don't know how much it's going to cost. Estimates are wildly higher than that, then the \$200 million. We know that's not estimated in this year's budget, the extra amount for the dry dock. It's like this huge unknown that we don't know.

I've spoken to industry experts about the dry dock. Sure, if we can get a lucrative Coast Guard contract for six, eight, 10 Coast Guard ships, to work on them in Newfoundland and Labrador, that's great. The government builds the dry dock to that spec, but instead of that, they don't know what to build. You can't just build a dry dock and see who comes to get work on it.

My understanding from talking to industry experts is you have to build the dry dock to a specific spec for a specific piece of long-term work. So we have no indication or inkling of if there's anything in the works for that. Hopefully, the government are working on that; otherwise, it's \$200 million for a dry dock that might cost, you know, \$400 million, \$500 million, \$600 million, \$700 million for work that they don't know what's going to happen on. So I think that is a huge unknown up in the air, Speaker.

We also know the government promised tax credits for rotational workers. I wonder how many of you watching, when they knocked on your door, said that they would give you a tax credit if you're a rotational worker and that is not in this year's budget.

They said they were going to expand the scope of the Physical Activity Tax Credit. That's a much lower value item for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador but still would be hugely beneficial to families. The government promised to expand it to allow people to buy sneakers and bikes and things like that. That is something very reasonable that they could have done in this year's budget and they have not done that.

They promised overhead support and incentives for doctors and nurse

practitioners. They also campaigned on transparency. Now, when we look at this review, we're not even able to talk to the individuals who wrote the Churchill River Independent Review.

So I did leave off on that. I will circle back to that for a little bit because, while we were just on a bit of a recess talking about the amendment, I had numerous individuals write me to say: Thank you so much for talking about the MOU because the government to categorize this report and to categorize the MOU that we had, like the 1969 deal, is wildly out to lunch.

I encourage anyone who is real interested to read the report. It does not say anything like that. I know one of my colleagues who's going to speak after today has pulled out some excellent quotes from the book that they're going to enlighten us on in terms of this report. It would be really nice if we could talk to the people who wrote this report.

If you consider the five recommendations that are in this report, they're not unreasonable. I can certainly see how the Review Committee came up with those. It doesn't say throw it away, it doesn't say it was a bad deal, it doesn't say it was a bad MOU. It gives reasonable suggestions of how the government could move forward and a lot of these things, you know, are kind of major policy decisions.

For example, how much do you want to get taxes versus jobs versus industry? Those are fair considerations and if you ask two different or 10 people their opinions, or experts, they'd give you different options. I'm very comfortable with where we landed for the MOU. Obviously, as I've said, there were many definitive agreements yet to be negotiated. There was still a lot of nuance and specifics to be negotiated and so that remains for the government. There is still a lot to negotiate.

They're not tearing up the review but it's like the 1969 deal, yet the review panel, the

negotiating team is very similar. One of the members is consistent across the negotiating team so it couldn't have been that bad of a deal because the negotiating team still has one of the same core members and they're adding a different ex-Fortis CEO expert, obviously, and then a different lawyer.

If the MOU was as bad as they described, why keep one of the core members from Hydro on the negotiating team? I think that categorizes it and describing it like the 1969 deal is not appropriate in my opinion, Speaker.

I'd encourage anyone to look at page 42 and 43 of the recommendations of the government's own report that they're now hanging their hat on because those are the recommendations that are not – they don't really comment at all about the MOU. It doesn't say to rip up the MOU. It just talks about some policy options the government can opine on and that is their prerogative.

I also do want to reiterate the Premier, when the news conference said, in terms of talking about the political affiliations of one member on the negotiating committee, looking straight in the camera and said, I don't care. I personally think that was inappropriate but it's up to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to decide that. In a news conference in public, to look at the camera and say, I don't care about peoples' concerns about political affiliation of someone on that negotiating team, I just think that speaks volumes.

I do want to talk about other things in my time left that are very important for the budget and for the government. I do want to reiterate – I still can't get over the fact that when we look at the budget and the gas prices built into the revenue forecast, that the government just chose a different amount of money per price of oil, I believe it was \$6 lower than what the average of the gas-pricing experts chose. I scanned *Hansard* just to make sure I didn't miss a

correction or anything on that and I don't believe I have but I welcome correction if I got that wrong.

In terms of coming up with the budget and the revenue for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Finance pays – I understand that they pay experts to understand what the gas price should be and what the forecast should be, which I agree with. It's important to get accurate information, and that the government decided to go with the dollar value, \$6 a barrel less because they felt like it because they thought that was being extra conservative.

There was a way, from the policy perspective, to craft a conservative budget and still use accurate numbers in developing the budget of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. I still think that is wild, Speaker. They are politicizing the revenue inputs of the government, which we don't yet know what the bond rating agencies and if they have an opinion in it, but I still can't get over that.

We have Finance Estimates tomorrow so I look forward to asking those questions to the Minister of Finance and the Finance team tomorrow morning in Estimates.

I also want to talk about speed cameras. I was going to ask this in Question Period today. So this morning we had Estimates for Government Services, very relevant to the budget. I was very proud last year to put in a pilot program about cameras on school buses. The school bus arm goes out, that means there's a red stop sign. I wait with my little guy at the bus every morning and when the stop sign goes out, cars have to stop in both directions, that is extremely important.

I'm very proud of the pilot project that we put in, I believe it was six buses that took two videos of a car. If a car passes the bus when the stop sign is out, it takes a video

from two angles. So there's a full video of someone going around –

SPEAKER: I'm starting to find it difficult to hear the hon. Member. I would ask Members to take their conversations outside.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

So you put out the bus arm with two cameras and it takes a video if a car goes around that.

I was very disappointed to learn this morning in Estimates that the government has not sent any tickets out for people who – up until December, they did not send any tickets out in terms of cars that broke the law and went around the bus with the stop arm out.

Now, I understand that there was a mail strike for a part of that time, but the department would have had a contingency plan, like a courier. For example, if that was my project and there was a mail strike and people were breaking the law going around the stop bus arm when it was out, I would have couriered those tickets. I would have made sure that they got those tickets because speed cameras are one thing but cameras on school buses, drivers who are going around a stop sign on a school bus when the stop sign is extended, and they didn't send out any tickets. We heard that in Estimates this morning, Speaker.

I would have couriered those tickets because the financial value of that ticket is not what we're talking about. We're talking about the public safety value of someone who knowingly – and we have video evidence that they broke the law. I still can't understand that, Speaker. I think that is very important; I wanted to get it on the record. I still can't believe that.

I also want to talk about gas prices also for a bit because in Estimates this morning there was a question about the 5 cents from

Come By Chance. That has been gone for a while now. I've spoken about that, I think, three times already in this sitting of the House that the 5 cents was gone. I recommend that if anyone is still unsure, they should go read the *Petroleum Products Act*. The department staff, while I thank them for their work, they didn't seem to be up on the latest information about gas prices either, Speaker.

I want to note in terms of the Carbon Price Adjustment, which is an incredibly relevant part, if you look at the price of gas today in Newfoundland and Labrador – and this is relevant to the budget because that impacts the taxes paid by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on the price of gas. So if you look at the price of gas today, Speaker, 10.5 cents a litre is for the Carbon Price Adjustment. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are paying 10.5 cents a litre today for the Carbon Price Adjustment, which is wild.

I'll admit, we brought in the change in this Legislature because we weren't sure what was going to happen with the Clean Fuel Regulations. I had in my head and I said to my team, and I said this in Estimates this morning, three cents was my personal barometer. If it was under three cents – because we didn't know how much the PUB was going to add on – if it was less than three cents, that's one thing. But now, today, I've looked and it's 10.5 cents a litre for the Carbon Price Adjustment.

I also want to note that New Brunswick, their government announced, they had a bill, actually, December 1, 2025, to get rid of their carbon price adjustment. Good for them, getting rid of the carbon price adjustment. So this is kind of a legal issue, I'm sure, which is in the courts, I guess, which is above my head. So the government passed a bill in New Brunswick on December 1, 2025, to remove the carbon price adjustment, but then the New Brunswick board put it back on.

So I don't know how that's going to end up because the provinces in Atlantic Canada were not appropriately considered in the Clean Fuel Regulations. So the oil companies are getting money from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Atlantic Canadians on the price of gas so that they can meet the federal government's Clean Fuel Regulations.

It's one thing if it's a nominal amount. I mean, three cents is not nominal, but that was my personal barometer, and now it's 10.5 cents today. Like I said, New Brunswick took it off, but now the New Brunswick regulator put it back on again. So I don't know how that's going to net out, but I do think the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should be on the federal government to remove the Clean Fuel Regulations and that would save Newfoundlanders and Labradorians 10.5 cents a litre.

I do want to also mention that in the gas price review that the Public Utilities Board just completed last year, they look at all the inputs: How much does it cost Irving? How much does it cost those companies to bring a litre of oil to have it in the pump? How much does it cost the retailer? They look at all those inputs and that is what the price is based on with an appropriate profit amount. So the price is based on that. Now they're getting an extra 10.5 cents on top of that so that they can meet the federal government's Clean Fuel Regulations.

That is wild. I cannot believe it costs those companies 10.5 cents a litre to meet the Clean Fuel Regulations. They should get rid of the Clean Fuel Regulations, in my opinion, the federal government should.

I would hope that Prime Minister Carney – they got rid of the Clean Electricity Regulations, they need to get rid of the Clean Fuel Regulations because it's costing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians 10.5 cents a litre – wild.

If you go to the Public Utilities Board you can see that gas price breakdown. They're going to have to get rid of it. It's kind of a legal mess, I guess, now with New Brunswick taking it off. They removed it in the Legislature in New Brunswick and then the New Brunswick regulator put it back on.

That is a very complicated issue that I implore the government to take more seriously and to work with the federal government to remove that 10.5 cents. That would save Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a lot of money.

While we're talking about gas prices, which directly impacts the government's Treasury, I do want to get back and remind everyone that we were talking about gas prices. In this Legislature, we kept gas prices the same, Speaker. We had an amendment to lower gas prices even further and the government invoked closure so that gas prices would stay the same. We could no longer do a friendly amendments. We could no longer make more amendments because the government invoked closure so that gas prices would stay the same in Newfoundland and Labrador. I just want to remind everyone of that, while I'm speaking about that.

I have four minutes left, so I do want to make sure I talk about red tape. We learned a bit about that in Estimates this morning. So far, there were five staff that we had in the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology, including three business navigators and those are now moved to the Department of Government Services, fair enough. They've moved the red tape staff from one department to another. We're certainly looking forward to the government fulfilling their very aggressive commitments on red tape reduction.

The government mandate says that their ambition is to get to an A. I certainly hope and wish them all the best in that endeavour. I look forward to hearing how

they're going to get to an A from the CFIB. I think that's very important.

A few other things I just wanted to touch on because there are a lot of things going on. There are gas prices, there's the Churchill Falls Review Committee and then also I just want to remind everyone about St. Clare's Hospital.

Fine, it's their prerogative, the government's prerogative to cancel the contract for the new hospital on Kenmount Road. Fair, that's their prerogative to do so, but they're doubling down on St. Clare's.

We know there are documents that exist that show that St. Clare's, the cost to bring it up to snuff is wildly disproportionate to the cost of building a new hospital. There was a rating, I don't have the report to hand today, but there was a rating that I previously referred to in this House that found that St. Clare's, it was not appropriate, from a construction perspective, it was not worth redeveloping St. Clare's.

I just want to remind everyone that the current government are doubling down on their investment on St. Clare's. Anyone who has been to St. Clare's and if you haven't – well, actually, I hope people don't have to go to St. Clare's. I wish Newfoundlanders and Labradorians lots of health and wellness and their families health and wellness so they don't have to go to St. Clare's. If you're talking to anyone who has recently been to St. Clares, find out from them what their experience was like – just wild.

The government are still looking at building ferries, which was one of their core election commitments. I believe they're going to build three ferries, was it? I don't know if you build the ferries in the drydock. Maybe that could be something the drydock could be used for, although then we're building a drydock – \$200 million from Equinor – paying more money for a drydock and then building some ferries – oh my, Speaker.

I guess, in conclusion, and in proportion to the amount of messages that I got from people watching, I do want to just go back, in my final minute, to the Churchill Falls deal. I think for the government to categorize the MOU, which they had no opinion on for over a year and, now, all of a sudden, it's like Joey's 1969 deal which is a wild miscategorization of the Churchill Falls MOU – emphasize wild.

I'd encourage anyone to read the report. You know, there are some suggestions I don't agree with at all but if you asked numerous experts, two different groups of experts to come up with different opinions on the MOU, I'm sure you'd get different analysis.

The recommendations are not damning on the MOU that we had. They're not damning on the existing MOU. I do hope and I do really wish, on behalf of my children and future grandchildren, that the government is able to get a better deal. I really do wish that. I worry that time is going to go by and there's an election in Quebec and then we'll have to get a deal when we're back in government in a few years' time. We'll have missed all the opportunity costs of all those years.

I have 20 seconds left, so I just want to thank everyone for listening today. I look forward to further debate on the amendment.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in this House and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

I had a whole speech ready but, listening to the last speaker, I think I would like to have a couple of things and I will start my address by saying oh my – oh my.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: One minute, I don't know anything and the next minute, I know it all. Unbelievable. You can't have it both ways, right?

To be in Estimates and hear the reasoning behind no tickets being put out was because of the post office strike and to blame it on the good people in that department is unbelievable to be honest.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Unbelievable. You have mouths on both sides of your faces over there. It's getting worse, too.

To take an offence on something and then to call the independent report on the MOU, to say that that's an opinion piece but then to get up and say that the price on three cents was just my threshold or my opinion, well, then, I guess you can't have it both ways that way either.

What about the 10.5 cents per litre that we were complaining about over there, but never once took responsibility for what the carbon tax added, that everybody on that side agreed to, that brought it to this province? If it weren't for the Official Opposition of the day and PC Party, it would probably still be in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Like I said, you can't have it both ways.

When you turn around then and compare that to taking one cent off the price of gas, when people needed a break with gas, but it was going to cost us six cents to do that. We see the price of gas, on a 50-litre tank,

you're saving 50 cents. Can we put that in perspective?

I know 50 cents is a lot of money once it adds up and stuff like that, but to say that the 10 cents – the federal government took 10 cents off their pricing and we noticed that within the next week, it was up 20 more cents. Like I said, I think it's a little bit disingenuous to talk like that.

To say that people are doubling down on the report on the MOU, what about the doubling and tripling down on – you called Muskrat Falls a misguided report, well, then I would say that the MOU that was presented to us wasn't worth the paper it was wrote on. That's why we didn't vote for it. It was based on 10-year-old data. We asked questions that couldn't be answered because of redactions and stuff like that.

Then to talk about that you don't deserve to be saddled with the fact that Joey made a bad deal. Well, guess what? I wasn't here when Muskrat Falls was sanctioned either.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: But I will say this, we don't have to wait 50 years to own Muskrat Falls. We just need to get transmission through Quebec and we'll be making money on Muskrat Falls, there's no two ways about it.

We own Muskrat Falls, just in case you're wondering – just in case anybody over there is wondering – 100 per cent, no dealings with Quebec. We didn't give that away to Quebec – 100 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. DWYER: Speaker, it's hard to hear with the people chirping down in the front. I hear that a lot too, so you have to practise what you preach, I guess.

I'm going to move on to a few more things that I want to talk about from my district as it relates to the budget. I will commend the

Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board and his department for the due diligence that they did on this budget because we all know – on this side anyway, I mean obviously we can't expect you guys to think sensibly.

With that being said, I think the thing about it is that we have found a department that is looking through the lens of what is best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that we all –

AN HON. MEMBER: Completely disrespectful.

J. DWYER: You're someone to say the word "disrespectful." Yeah, right on.

SPEAKER: I would ask that you address the Chair.

J. DWYER: Well, Speaker, then there are other conversations that are going on while I'm trying to speak.

The other thing about it is – actually, why not, we'll talk about integrity and respect for a second because it baffles me that you speak out of both sides of your face. Integrity is something that's built within. That's the way you're raised. That's what you bring to the table as an individual. Respect is for the people that we represent. No longer are we in this House to represent ourselves and our own personal name.

I represent just shy of 13,000 people in the great, industrious District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: So when I speak in this House, I'm speaking on behalf of those 13,000 people. I'm not here to take personal opinions and conjecture and all of that kind of stuff. I'm here to make sure that I'm bringing that integrity that I was raised with to the table, and I'm bringing the respect that I have for my constituents so that they

are well represented in this House very respectfully.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: I will just say that I have never even considered turning off the comments on my Facebook page.

AN HON. MEMBER: They didn't listen then; they won't listen now.

J. DWYER: I think that's the whole thing is about listening.

I will move on to some very positive things that I have commended the – before I was rudely interrupted.

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board and his staff have really looked at this whole budget process, which I know has not been easy. I know the extra hours that he puts in. It's no sweet to see his truck out there 9:30 or 10 at night, because I've been here a few nights where I actually went home before him, unless he was out on a trip now, I don't know. Maybe you were parked there for the week, I don't know.

The thing is, I know they looked at this budget process through the lens of what's best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and guess what? That's actually our job. That's the whole job of this whole House, to make sure that we make life better for the people we represent and we do it with integrity and respect.

This weekend coming up, we have the Fire School down in Marystown, in my district. It's great to have it. The Fire School has been on the go for about 50 years and this is the first time it was held down on the Burin Peninsula. So I'm really happy. I'm glad that the minister is going to be joining me on Saturday so we can let the firefighters know that we do have their back.

I really like the piece that was added about doubling the benefit to our volunteer firefighters. It's very important. As was said in Member's statement earlier today by one of my colleagues from Fogo Island - Cape Freels, these are the people who really, genuinely keep our towns going, along with our volunteer service boards and councils, they all work in concert with each other. One of the points that came out of that Member's statement today is that our job is to make sure that they're well equipped and well trained to do their job and to keep us all safe.

So for all our volunteer firefighters who are going to Fire School in Marystown this weekend: Welcome to the hub of the Burin Peninsula. I can't wait to see you guys on Saturday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: I say guys in colloquialism because I know there are going to be lots of female firefighters as well and they bring so much to the table as well.

I think the thing that will come out of Fire School this weekend too – and I know it's a full week of training and stuff like that and learning so that they can bring it back to their home fire department, but really one of the biggest things that came out of this budget is the regional fire service. My colleague here from Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde – I finally got it right – he was really on the line last year. There was a lot going on. God bless him for being a big part of it and anybody else who had anything to do with it because those people really did appreciate, not only the recognition, I guess, but the fact that when we went down to Marystown, last year, and we had the Fire Services Association AGM, it was very well attended, but it was like a morale booster after they had a morale buster all summer trying to fight the wildfires.

I think this weekend, developing those regional plans is certainly going to be

welcomed and I'm sure that every MHA in the House will be supporting their volunteer firefighters in order to make sure that our regions are looked after in the light of any forest fires.

Another good thing, I think, that was in the budget was about the ambulance service and upskilling. The Minister of Health very eloquently put it in Estimates that improving the amount and doing the training, I think that if the Minister of Education wants to put an ambulatory upskilling course down in the CONA in Burin, then we'd certainly welcome that. I'm sure the Member for Burin - Grand Bank would agree.

Like I said, that's a really important piece because it's one thing to buy ambulances and to have the buses but we need people to operate them and that seems to be the issue that kind of deteriorated the service in a community or a region in my district of Terrenceville. It's nice that I'm able to talk to the minister about that because it's a region that's kind of set in the middle because they're an hour and a half away from the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre and they're an hour and a half away from the Clarenville G. B. Cross.

The thing about it is that they're caught in the middle. If there are any delays for an ambulance to get to them, it's just delaying the tertiary care that people need immediately once they get hurt. Hopefully, we'll get that ambulance service back up and running because over the last 10 years it's deteriorated to absolutely zero.

Another good thing in the budget, I think, was that we increased the brush cutting budget, that's been a thorn in my side in my district for the seven years I've been here. There wasn't much done in that light, I guess, prior to me becoming the MHA so it was something that we had to work on right out of the gate. We've done brush cutting in many areas. Will it ever all be done? No because by the time I get it all done, I'll

have to go back and start what I already have done.

Like I said, when you have a big district, a very long, vast district, it's incumbent to make sure that we're maintaining not only the roads but the side roads as well, which is very important when it comes to safety.

Another big one in our budget is water and sewer. I think that every community will avail of this impetus of the government for the simple fact that I find that right now, while it's not front of mind, I guess kind of thing, because there's no crisis or anything like that, but I will go on the record and say that within the next 10, 15, 20 years, water is going to be probably more important than oil and gas or energy, anything, because if you can't sustain life, then we don't need energy for anything.

For all the towns that are out there that haven't had their infrastructure improved in 40 or 50 years in some communities in my district, then, like I said, get your applications in, let me know that they're coming in. I'll certainly work with the department to make sure that we have a plan going forward. I think it's kind of falling short, I guess, on the other side that this is a four-year mandate, not a four-month mandate. So it's important that we develop a plan over the next four years and we look out for the whole province as opposed to having to beg and plead for a little bit, which I had to do in the last seven years.

Another big one for my industrious district is the economic development, very important in my district and very important to the province. So when we look at Bay du Nord, Churchill Falls and defence spending, these are three different towers of spending and pots of money, I guess, that my district is going to be going after for the simple fact that we want to go to work. There's no two ways about that. There are not very many in the District of Placentia West - Bellevue that don't want to go to work.

To be quite honest, it's so important that we develop new industries and we make sure that we're looking after the people that would avail of that by creating these new industries. Not only were we looking after the people by getting them back to work, but we're also going to be able to be better equipped to look after our roads, our seniors, our hospitals, our schools. It's not about frivolously spending money, it's about looking at mitigative risk and understanding it, as opposed to going into ventures that are risky and uncosted, but they're on the table.

One of the last things I'll mention is the fishery, and like my colleague for Burgeo - La Poile did in his petition today, I agree. I'll give you this one. In my district, if you're on the Placentia Bay side, you can't go fishing. If you're from Chapel Arm to Sunnyside, on the Trinity Bay side, you can go seven days a week.

I think there are going to be new negotiations going on with the minister. Being from Newfoundland, I think she would understand that. But maybe it just needs to be explained a little bit better. Because this here seems to be not something that we asked for. They gave us a little bit but I think, as a caucus, we're going to make sure we go for the whole province to be treated like the rest of Canada, as opposed to dividing people and let them fight amongst themselves, so that they're distracted by what we're going to do tomorrow, but that seems to be the case.

In my last couple of minutes, it was mentioned a few times here recently about the disaster that happened in St. Lawrence with the *Truxtun* and *Pollux* and how the U.S. Memorial hospital came out of that. That's been a mainstay on the Burin Peninsula for a long time. The legacy that Lanier Phillips has in that town is certainly tremendous. I remember I was The Heritage Run Tourism coordinator. The Heritage Run - Burin Peninsula, basically it goes from

Goobies right down to Point May and all places in between on both sides.

One of the most endearing stories that I got, there was a lady who was basically the historian, as my colleague from Burin - Grand Bank will attest, Mrs. Ena Edwards. I was sitting having a cup of tea in her house one day and she told me the story about – she was the young girl, by the way, that was down there with a camera taking the pictures. Nobody realizes that was, kind of, the fortitude that this young lady had and I think she was only eight, nine or 10 years old when that happened.

They remember carrying the people that were in the disaster back to their homes to clean them and feed them and house them and to get them all better. To my colleague's point, when he talked about this, at the time, people here in Newfoundland and Labrador weren't really aware that there was a coloured people in the world, kind of thing, because it was just closed off.

Out of that disaster, there was a lot of oil and stuff in the water. Mrs. Edwards tells a story of a gentleman coming in and they were cleaning him and stuff like that and they were cleaning him so hard that it was hurting his skin. He said: Stop. It's okay. It's clean. She goes no, no. You might have come in that colour, but you won't be leaving that colour.

We look back at it today as something that was very – I hate to say the word “ignorant,” but it was a form of it, I guess. It's just not being aware, but it was innocent.

AN HON. MEMBER: Innocence.

J. DWYER: It was. That's what it was. It was innocence. The thing about it is that's such a big part of our legacy now on the Burin Peninsula because it really raised us all up. It was something that we look at in our history as unfortunate, but it's something in our history that we're very proud of.

Like I said, as the Member for Burin - Grand Bank will attest, every time that Mr. Lanier Phillips came to visit St. Lawrence, it was like a massive come home year kind of thing. Everybody wanted a piece of him. He'd come and he'd open up soccer games. He was there for St. Lawrence Day a while ago, but I remember all that. We even made the trek then to St. Lawrence.

We always made the trek to watch the soccer, but when it came to this stuff with the *Truxtun* and *Pollux*, it is a great legacy on the Burin Peninsula, of the strength, the resilience and the kindness of the people on the Burin Peninsula.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The subamendment speaks to the failure to deliver on the government's promise to help support the K-to-12 education system, and that's what I intend to speak on in my 20 minutes. I want talk about, I guess, inclusion, about the resourcing of inclusive education. Because inclusive education is more than just including people in the classroom of different needs.

Interestingly enough, just after this budget was released and we had the big announcement about what was in it for education, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association began a Wear Red for Ed campaign. Red is a colour of an emergency. Teachers, students and schools basically deserve better. The budget is simply not good enough and significant gaps remain in the educational matters.

Now, if this budget was as good as the government promotes, then we wouldn't have had that campaign from the Teachers' Association.

There are three main focal points in talking to teachers and talking to the association: 94 units – I brought this up already – and 20 TLAs to be operationalized. I'm not sure what that means, but it's certainly not enough to lower class caps for approximately 250 schools in this province.

Speaker, \$1 million for social workers to address school violence. It is certainly not enough for 250 schools. Recruitment and retention of teachers – unless you're going to address the underlying causes that makes it difficult to recruit teachers and to retain them, then you can announce all the recruitment efforts or numbers you want, you just will not bring people in.

In the context of school violence and complex classes, complex working conditions, New Brunswick just ratified a collective bargaining agreement that will make it very hard for Newfoundland and Labrador to attract teachers. They addressed a lot of the issues that are probably keeping teachers away. They've had a similar fiscal outlook, but they've obviously made a decision that education is the foundation for their economic and social recovery.

In light of that competitive edge to one of our Atlantic provinces, we have some work here to do. We knew back in 2024 that in Central Newfoundland, schools were being told not to send children for assessment because of the backlog in the health system at that time.

So we're still dealing with problems, Speaker, that I dealt with as a teacher, as an NLTA president, and it doesn't seem that it's gotten any better in the interim.

I've referenced this before, "The Blueberry Story." Anyway, Jamie Vollmer was the executive of an ice cream company that had become famous in the mid-1980s when *People* magazine chose their –

SPEAKER (Dwyer): Order, please!

It's a little loud. It's hard to hear the person speaking.

J. DINN: – blueberry ice cream as the best ice cream in America, and he represented a group of business people who basically believed that they needed to improve their public schools. He blamed the fact that schools needed to change and educators were a major part of the problem.

He was giving his speech to a group of teachers, and one teacher asked, what happens when you are standing at the receiving dock and you see an inferior shipment of blueberries arrive? What do you do?

His response: "I send them back." This is the response from the teacher: "That's right ... and we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude and brilliant. We take them with ADHD, junior rheumatoid arthritis, and English as their second language. We take them all! Every one! And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it's not a business. It's school!"

Too often, I think schools are lumped with how we need to be efficient. How do we know it's becoming a political issue? Every time there's an election and the government decides we won an election platform, we're going to come up with some new study; we have got to fix the education system all over again. The problem is in the resourcing.

I have three schools in my district, two which have significant needs and a population with people with socio-economic needs and an amazing staff of teachers and TLAs and support staff who do the best. Amazing school communities in all of them. But back in 2023, at the end of December, there was a story. A colleague, a friend of mine I went to school with, Michael Walsh, a retired teacher at the time, who spoke out about the violence in the school system. He

talked about students swearing at him, blaring air horns in his ears.

Now, if you know Mike, he's a big guy, a basketball player, you name it. He said that there were many problems with the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador, says Walsh, one of the largest being an underfunded and under-resourced inclusive classroom model that's creating a monster for students and teachers alike.

The president of the NLTA at that time said that also, class size composition is included. He says that the tentative agreement does make a stated commitment on the part of the provincial government to respond within one year with results from an advisory committee which will guarantee teachers the space to discuss teacher recruitment and retention. Now, think about that, violence in the classroom has been an issue long before this and really, nothing had been done to address it. It's still a recruitment and a retention issue.

What we had was an Education Accord struck, and I'll be blunt, it was designed to kick the problem down the road, which we've heard so many times before. We had a report then that was released. We found that it had, well, fake references. We don't know what's come out of it since, but that was in 2025-2026 and still the problems have not been addressed and they're not being addressed in this budget, when it comes to the recruitment, retention and resourcing. It's been a delay.

Back in 2002, I sat in on a few days of the Carter Churchill inquiry. I don't know if the culture has changed; I suspect not. It was very clear listening to the former deputy minister in the department and the former CEO of the English School District on what the problem was when it comes to resources because schools could go to the district; we got nowhere. The district could go to the department; they got nowhere.

Here's the testimony. The deputy minister, at the time, who gave the testimony, said, if the district wanted to deviate from allocation terms, then it could simply get permission from the department. In other words, what he was saying, the district could come to the department and get resources and he said it never happened – never did it happen that the English School District came to the department looking for resources.

You might ask why. Well, let's take a look at the reason why because it lies in the budgetary process.

The former CEO of the English School District talked about any government department, such as his, when they're looking at cuts, they're always facing a contraction of services. We're in an era of constant contraction of resources at the management level. He noted at that time that \$26 million had been removed from the budget of the district. Now how in the name of God do you make up that shortfall in an educational system?

Any conversation that the CEO had with the department always came around to, well, what are you going to cycle? What are you going to repurpose? What are you going to rob from Peter to pay Paul? What again are you going to redeploy because you're not getting any more? The budget will come down and we were left with the pie and that was all we got.

At the time, again, here is another piece of the testimony: any time we had a conversation, it always came back to what can we cycle – and what I define by cycle is what can we take from elsewhere to make that happen, to operate within your resource envelope.

When full-day kindergarten was brought in – make no mistake, I support it, but what it did, to get the teachers there for it, it increased class size, removed teachers from the rest of the system. So it was a zero-sum game. That was not an addition, it

was basically doing what the CEO of the English school district was testifying.

In that milieu, he said, we were operating in, no matter what the issue was, no matter what the discussion was around resources, it always was about using what you had, repurposing what you have. This is the allocation, that's it, that's all you get. In other words, it came down to there was no flexibility. There is a culture of don't ask for more because it's pointless and that's the only time the answer that people would get.

Now we have a budget that really hasn't changed, it's just touching on the – it's very cursory, it is not dealing with the issues or seriously going to address the needs in our school system.

Now, the Minister of Health has been questioned a few times about the comments about suing the department and so on and so forth. Well, I'm going to take what we see in the Department of Education because we always saw that Carter Churchill, that his family, what did they do to get the services for their son? They filed a human rights complaint.

In New Brunswick back in 2022, I think it was, 2023, before that there was a grievance filed with the Labour Relations Board because the district failed to protect its employees, its teachers. This has to do with inclusive education. A young student who was prone to violent outbursts and teachers were hurt, TLAs were hurt, yet if you look at it there are no more resources provided but the department at the time more or less blamed the teachers. That was very clear, because the adjudicator noted that really the employer basically dismissed the claims, dismissed the concerns of the professionals on the front line.

The resource teacher testified regarding stress for being criticized by the district grant representatives when flinching in the face of yet another assault and for being told her response to sexual touching should

have been to create proximity between herself and – so no matter whatever the student did, it was the teacher's fault.

In the end, the ruling came down to this. The adjudicator says: "In response, the Employer behaved as though the right to a safe working environment did not extend to teachers and other school personnel and instead resorted to victim-blaming and short-term solutions."

In the end, the adjudicator said, under these circumstances, I conclude that the harm experienced significantly outweighs the societal value of inclusive education.

"Therefore, I believe the harm suffered cannot be justified and certainly cannot be outweighed by the value derived from the Student's learning experience."

"Children are entitled to an education, and school employees deserve to work in a safe environment." I would add, other students as well, Speaker.

Now, the reason I bring this up, a year or so ago I was approached by a number of teachers who were experiencing some violence and I said follow this. File grievances, take the government to court through the NLTA, do what you need, but this is the only way, it seems, that we're going to get issues addressed, always, and it should not have to come to that.

I heard the minister talk about safe and caring schools. I used to refer to it as safe and scary schools because, while there was a wonderful document, there was precious little in the way of resources for the schools to ensure that their systems were safe. At the beginning of this year, we had a school that was without a PA system. Recently, I had schools talk about, are we getting any of the AEDs? We have an AED that's well out of date. When I was teaching, we had to fight to have an occupational health and safety board with a committee at each school. The employer did not want that.

Here's an email I got from a teacher: I'm bringing to your attention a pervasive and dangerous occupational health and safety issue that is being systematically – systematically – ignored: the widespread vermin infestation currently affecting our schools.

Multiple school buildings are currently experiencing it. Students and staff are eating in working spaces contaminated by rodent feces. Extensive SIMS reports have been filed and OHS concerns were raised, yet the standard response from the provincial government remains dismissive, often stating that all buildings have them.

Lack of custodial staffing and lack of proper PPE has resulted in teachers being forced to clean up biohazardous waste themselves.

Now, I had that conversation with teachers when I was NLTA president. My response was, put down the broom, not your job – not your job. Custodial staff would be off sick and the employer did not replace them. There weren't enough to clean the schools.

There are pictures. They've sent pictures of it. In fact, they're cleaning up rodent feces off children's desks, off artwork. The current Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Public Procurement, he and I were out at a protest at Frank Roberts Junior High, and one of the big issues they were talking about that time: rats. So the rat population in schools, one thing is, I guess, it's good for the rat population. We're certainly incubating a good residency of rats.

I will say this in my last few minutes, I think teachers, and certainly I am – I'm tired of the empty promises. I'm tired of stuff being kicked down the road. I think at a time when we're hearing people concerned about math scores, we're seeing cuts being made at the university, I guess we're not even providing the supports when it comes to the curriculum, the time that teachers need

addressing the diverse needs of students in the class.

I will say this, that if we're serious about a safe and caring school, then that comes down to putting your resources into the school itself. Several years ago, I had teachers come to me. One of their colleagues had been struck in the jaw by a student, Grade 2 – not high school, Grade 2 – with a full water bottle. It broke their jaw.

Now, that never really made the news, but they were highly upset. Of course, there are the comments like, terrible, which I don't know if they were meant to be serious or if they were meant to be dismissive is the problem here that I'm speaking about. Because it's the primary teachers in particular there that are dealing with it.

I will say this, the problem has not gone away – the problem has not gone away – and it needs to be finally taken seriously. Especially if we're going to deal with a safe and caring school – if we're really going to put our money where our mouth was, it's going to have to be more than \$1 million here, a little bit there, 94 units with no plan how we're going to hire them. We're going to have to take this seriously, Speaker, because we're not making the education system better if we're just starving it of the supports it needs.

Thank you.

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

My first opportunity – we're in the subamendment – to talk about the budget today. So thank you for the time. I appreciate that there's an hour on the clock. We'll see how long I have in me. I'm not as good as the Member for Mount Scio who apparently can just go forever and ever and ever – it doesn't matter how much time is on the clock.

What I do want to talk about today, obviously, is very important to Newfoundland and Labrador, the Churchill Falls deal, and what's going to happen next. We have a long history, of course, with the Churchill Falls River. Everyone is aware of it. We've been trying to get out of this deal since –

SPEAKER: I just wanted some clarity.

The Leader of the Official Opposition does get an hour because we're now debating the subamendment.

J. HOGAN: All right, thank you.

Anyway, as I was saying, 1969, it was not a good deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. Everybody knows that. There's no debate about that. As it was brought up in the House of Assembly today, lots of premiers and governments have tried in the last 57 years to tear up the old contract and to move on.

I remember being a little kid and actually hearing them about the year 2041 and doing the math. How old will I be in 2041? We're almost there in 2041. I saw an article, I think, in the Montreal Gazette a couple of hours ago and I think it was the minister of the Quebec government talking about 2041 is not really far away when you talk about hydroelectricity deals.

Hydroelectricity deals are generally done in 50-year blocks, so that's 15 years away. Essentially, we're there. We're in 2041. That's why, a couple of years ago, when the Liberal government negotiated the MOU, the time was right to talk about tearing up the old contract and moving on beyond 2041.

We had the MOU, I think, in the end of 2024. A lot went in to negotiating that MOU. I know Newfoundlanders and Labradorians didn't know about the ins and outs of what was happening with the MOU. The Minister of Energy, himself, said either yesterday or

today, we don't negotiate in public and I agree with that. We didn't negotiate the MOU in public. The negotiating team didn't negotiate in public, but there was a lot of work behind the scenes that went into the MOU.

After the MOU was signed, what the government decided to do was do two things. Debate the MOU in the House of Assembly and commit that if the government was successful when getting definitive agreements based on the MOU, to debate those agreements in the House of Assembly as well.

So two opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to understand everything that was in the MOU, ask questions to the negotiators of the MOU, ask questions to the experts and advisors who were publicly available about the MOU so everybody would have the information available to them, to make their own decision as to whether they thought the MOU was the right deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. On top of that, if we'd have gotten to the final agreements, the same thing would have happened.

One really good thing that came out of the debate in January 2025 is that we now have a process in the House of Assembly. We now have a precedent about how to do special debates in this House. Sure, it can be tweaked a little bit here and there but, at the end of the day it was a great opportunity – I'm going to go through some of the rules – for every single MHA who, therefore, represented every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian, to ask questions on behalf of their constituents about the MOU.

I was talking about timing. I went back and read some of the *Hansard* this morning, the original comments that were made, and there was an accusation that it was being rushed. As I said, a lot of information, a lot of time went into getting to that MOU.

After that, the MOU was signed and it was in the House of Assembly in January, there was still almost a year and a half of time that was needed to negotiate final agreements. A year and a half is a long time, so certainly there was no rush there. Not only that, of course, part of the MOU said if more time was needed, it could go beyond April of 2026 to continue negotiations, if they were proven that they were fruitful and there was an end in sight.

So you have a year and a half of negotiations, which can be extended, so no pressure and no rush at all, let's make sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians get the best deal.

We did have that debate in the House of Assembly. Deputy Speaker, you were there. I didn't read your quotes, but I'm sure you spoke to it at the time. I just want to talk about a couple of the rules that were brought forward at that time that we all voted on.

Rule three: "Speaking times shall be allocated as follows: (a) two hours each of total speaking time for the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition" – who is now the Premier – "and the Leader of the Third Party; (b) two hours each of total speaking time for the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology and two hours for the Official Opposition critic for this portfolio"

We gave equal time to the minister and equal time to the critic. We gave equal time to the premier and equal time to the Leader of the Official Opposition and gave equal time to the Leader of the Third Party as well. On top of that, 40 minutes each of total speaking time for each remaining Member of the House of Assembly.

Rule four: "Debate will proceed in the same manner as Committees of the House reviewing Estimates. Time will be allocated in 20-minute blocks. Members will speak in

debate or ask as many questions as they wish during each 20-minute allocation."

I remember when we were talking about these rules and the deputy premier of the day, him and I went back and forth, and I read a quote of his this morning and this is what he said when we opened up the debate in the House of Assembly that day – it was just after Christmas and he said he spent more time talking to me than he spent talking to his wife. So that made me laugh this morning when I read that.

We did spend a lot of time trying to figure out those rules. But the purpose of those rules is we get up in the House of Assembly and we talk for 20 minutes at a time and then someone else gets up and talks for 20 minutes at a time, but this was different. We all remember that the experts and the advisors and the negotiators sat there on the floor and we didn't want to just speak to them; we wanted the opportunity to treat it like Committee of the Whole where we could ask and have the questions answered.

That was an important part of those rules. Now, let's compare to where we are today. We have a review panel that provided a report. We have a review panel that we were told would speak to the public. We have a review panel that then said they were not speaking to the public. We have a review panel that, afterwards, said they were not speaking to the report because they might say something that will change what is in the report – I can't comprehend that – and they won't speak to the report publicly because of commercially sensitive reasons and solicitor-client privilege reasons and things like that.

Let's compare the situation I just talked about in January 2025 – a stark contrast, completely different. I know in Question Period today there was a lot of responses to questions. They weren't answers; they were responses to the questions about a 2 per cent escalation clause. Did we know what

we were signing? Did we know what we were voting for?

Of course we did. It was the whole point of the debate. The MOU was there for every Newfoundlander and Labradorian to see. It was there for every Member of the government to see. It was there for every Member of the Opposition to see.

When they say did we know what we were voting for it, I ask how they did not know what they were not voting for? That information was there, Deputy Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: To say now, a year and a half, almost two years later, did you know? It was there for everybody to see. They're saying we didn't vote on it because we didn't know it was going on.

The document was there. The experts were there. The negotiators were there. How did they not know? How did they decide not to vote? What they should have done, if they didn't believe in it, was vote no. There are only two options in this House of Assembly: vote yes or vote no. To do neither is disregarding their duties as Members of the House of Assembly.

I look back, as well, when we talk about the contrast between this situation and the debate in the House of Assembly, and here are some comments from the now Premier during the course of that debate:

"If this were any ordinary piece of legislation, we would have unlimited time to debate the details. If this were a simple annual budget for a single year, we would have more than 75 hours to debate the fine details and question officials under oath. But for this agreement" – the MOU – "this agreement that will last for most of the century, this Premier has dictated that the Official Opposition will have only 12 hours, spread over four days, to ask critical questions of importance for the people of

Newfoundland and Labrador on this MOU. That's it, four days."

So even if you accept his criticisms back then, that four days is not enough and that 12 hours is not enough and giving every single MHA in the province the opportunity to ask questions, it is four more days than the current panel is making itself available to answer questions in the public. It's 12 more hours than the current panel is making itself available to answer questions to the public. It's an incredibly stark contrast. Incredibly open and transparent in 2025; incredibly closed and secretive in 2026.

Some more comments from the Premier that day: "That is why it is so vital that we do everything in our power to make Newfoundland and Labrador the principal beneficiary of our majestic Churchill River."

I ask, Deputy Speaker, is the government doing everything in its power to make sure it's open and transparent? Is the government doing everything in its power so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians know what went into that report?

I would say the answer to that is no. We're not having them available to tell us what they think and how they came to their conclusions. We don't even know who they spoke to. Did they speak to experts? Did they speak to energy experts? Did they speak to accountants? Did they speak to members of negotiating teams from Quebec?

We have no idea. This is all very secretive and it's extremely important that we have all this information so we can trust the report and, without it, it's very difficult to trust that report.

I'll just go back again, Deputy Speaker, to talk about the situation that we're in now with regard to this report. At first, the panel was going to be available to speak to it. Then it was not going to be available but, at

this point, we were told it was the panel's choice, but no reasons were given.

Then yesterday, when I was talking to the media, they told me that they had heard the panel was not being available based on legal advice – information we found out from the media, not from the Premier and not from this government.

So this, in and of itself, is troubling, Deputy Speaker. Why are we getting different versions on the panel's availability? They didn't want to speak; they couldn't speak and now they have legal reasons not to speak. It's a moving target. That doesn't lend itself to openness and transparency either.

People say, well, why do we need to hear from the panel? I think there was a worry that said the report speaks for itself. Well, the report speaks for the report, but the individuals need to speak about how they got the information, how they came to their conclusions and who they spoke to. That is what transparency is about.

Right now, we have three individuals who the province knows next to nothing about. When you qualify, for example, a witness in court to give opinion evidence, to give expert evidence, it takes time to openly go through that person's background, their résumés and their qualifications.

I'm sure these three people are qualified, but we need to know who they are. We need to know their background. We need to know their résumés. We need to be asking those questions the same way would be done in an open court process. Shouldn't the public know and be able to analyze how these conclusions were reached?

I think the most troubling is all this information, as I said, was provided anonymously – the protection of anonymity. I mean, we hear things that we don't trust anonymous sources. There's a reason for that, because they're not publicly telling

people who they are. They're not publicly telling people that I'm sticking to the story that I'm telling you. They're giving it anonymously and you can't trust it. We need to know this information. How can we rely on these conclusions if we don't know where the information came from and who it came from and how can we trust these anonymous sources?

Here's the kicker. I assume if there is a new MOU, which will be different than this MOU that the panel reviewed, that that will be reviewed as well. The Premier has committed – and he said it again today, he was committed to reviewing any deal that goes towards this deal on the Churchill River. So if we have a new deal, it will have to be reviewed again.

What are we going to compare this review to? Because we don't know this one. We don't know what happened. We don't know who they spoke to. It's like a scientific experiment; you need to make sure the control is the same at each step in the way. We don't know what this process was. We don't know what this experiment was. We don't know the analysis. We don't know who they spoke to.

I'll just refer to another rule of the debate now. Rule 10: "Invited guests will answer Members' questions that are relevant respecting the memorandum of understanding, including its structure, operation and purpose, but may decline to answer questions which are commercially sensitive, subject to Cabinet confidence or solicitor-client privilege, or otherwise information that may excepted from disclosure in accordance with the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act."

Everybody understood when that debate was happening that the individuals on the floor of the House of Assembly had information that was commercially sensitive – had information, legal advice. I think everybody should have been okay with the fact that that information shouldn't be

disclosed because it might harm Newfoundland and Labrador, it might harm NL Hydro and it might harm the negotiations.

So the excuse that was given this week, that the members of this panel can't speak because of those reasons, it rings very hollow with me. Because we would not expect them to speak about that information. We would not expect them to disclose information that's commercially sensitive and damaging to Newfoundland and Labrador.

In fact, if you look at ATIPPA, section 35, it says: The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information which could reasonably be expected to disclose – as one example – information, the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to prejudice the financial or economic interest of the government of the province.

I would accept that. I would accept that these individuals were willing to speak to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the exception that they don't provide information that is damaging to any negotiations with Hydro-Québec or any other entity.

We talk about the panel. I think what we don't talk about and we haven't really heard this word at all is that this was a public inquiry. This was not just a panel that was put together, a committee did some research, did some work. It was done under the Public Inquiries Act, and we have a history in Newfoundland and Labrador of public inquiries. We have a fairly recent history in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some of the ones I looked at this morning, the unfortunate death of Donald Dunphy was a public inquiry; the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System, which is ongoing right now; the Inquiry Respecting Ground Search and Rescue for Lost and Missing Persons; and, of course,

the Muskrat Falls inquiry. These are very public inquiries, very open, very transparent, there for everybody to see.

The question is how public is a public inquiry, because there are restrictions and there should be restrictions. Especially in inquiries when you think about the Innu children in care, where stories of evidence can be extremely deep, personal and important and people in those situations may not want to disclose to the public. Those restrictions should happen and they do happen, and they're important and they're necessary.

But the general rule is that oral hearings, testimonies, submitted evidence are presumed to be open to public viewing and that private sessions can happen, but it's done on a case-by-case basis when the public interest is outweighed by privacy concerns, the safety of individuals, public security or a risk to prejudicing a future criminal trial. None which I would say are applicable here. In fact, I would say the public interest of disclosing all the information that went into this public inquiry outweighs each and every one of those things, and that's why all this information needs to be disclosed to the public that we speak.

I did look at some academic articles, as well, about public inquiries. I don't want to sound like I'm plagiarizing, so it's a Nottingham Law School report from 2018 and she talked about the benefits of being open in public when you have a public inquiry. "Witnesses are less likely to exaggerate or attempt to pass on responsibility."

When you're there and everybody in the public knows that you are the one speaking, you're probably going to have a little bit of a tendency to be honest and open about what you're saying. The light is on you; you know the light is on you; you're not going to get away with anything. You're going to be upfront and honest.

“Information becomes available as a result of others reading or hearing what witnesses have said.” This is the situation that we’re in now. We’re reading information, and we have no idea where this information came from or who said it.

“There is a perception of open dealing,” in public inquiries, “which helps to restore confidence” in the situation. So if this government really wants to be open and transparent and really wants Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to believe in this report, they need to have the perception of open dealing which will help them get to that point.

Some other quotes in this article say there’s no doubt that a “need for openness and public scrutiny essential for democratic accountability and for open justice demands that a public inquiry is held as publicly as possible.” “Each time a restriction is imposed” – which it has been in this case, many restrictions – “on the public nature of an inquiry, there is a risk that public confidence in the inquiry will be undermined, reducing the weight and impact of its report and its ability to address public concern; the effect is cumulative. It is vital that, whilst maintaining a fair balance between the personal rights of individuals and the public, conducting public inquiries as openly and publicly as possible remains a paramount objective.”

I would say that’s a quick little search this morning on some academic articles about the importance of public inquiries, and it’s not for our sake. You know, we’re in Question Period asking questions and it’s not for Members on this side of the House of Assembly that we’re asking those questions. In fact, if they would be public about the information that was provided in the report, as the quotes I just read, it’s to give Newfoundlanders and Labradorians confidence in that the report that they commissioned under the *Public Inquiries Act, 2006* can be relied on. Without that full disclosure, without that full information, it

simply cannot be relied on for the full truth of the contents of what is in the report.

So I ask the Premier and I ask the minister, if we’re going to continue to embark on negotiations with Hydro-Québec, or whatever they decide to do as the government with regard to the development of the Churchill River, be open and transparent about the process to date, and commit to being open and transparent in the future.

We maybe don’t need to have a debate on this report in the House of Assembly. I don’t think I’m interested in going too far and playing politics with the situation, but we do need to know. We do need to hear from them. We do need to know where they got the evidence. We do need to know who they spoke to so we can faithfully rely on the fact that it’s accurate and the witnesses are credible and believable and have the right background to provide the information that comes out of that report.

There are going to be further steps along the way. If, of course, the new government gets a deal, I assume there will be a second MOU. We’ve been down that road, and we’ve been down that road in a good way to bring the MOU to the House of Assembly. The Premier is committed to a referendum. In fact, on election night, the election rally, we held one as well.

As soon as I got off the stage, after I gave my speech about what I hoped and anticipated would happen during the course of the election, the first question that I got asked was the Opposition Leader said that he would have a referendum on the MOU – the very first thing I was asked. That was since eight months ago.

The Premier yesterday was asked, as I said in Question Period today, about that commitment and said, well, he needs to get a deal first. He didn’t have a deal when he made that promise in September of 2025. So what’s changed? Why is he running

away from the commitment to be open and transparent and fulfill the promises he made to the public? He doesn't have a deal today that we know of, so why can't he continue to commit to the promise that he made when the election campaign started?

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians voted for change of government in October 2025. We accept that fully. We respect the democratic process. But what we also expected was that promises that were made would be fulfilled. That's a pretty simple one. That's a pretty simple question that the Premier can't answer. He couldn't answer it for me; he couldn't answer it for media yesterday and couldn't answer for media this afternoon.

So if we want this process to play out so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are satisfied, as they say they're going to get the best deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, do the right thing. Be open, be transparent, tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians all the information and they'll be behind you if you make the right decision, if you tell them the basis for that decision.

When we hear in the House of Assembly that we are being accused of not knowing what was in the MOU after four days of debating the MOU, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians know better than that. They know better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Use the House, use the tools, use the promises that you've made, and I really do hope, as I said to the media last week, if there is a deal on the Churchill River, in five or 20 or 50 years, it will not matter to me whose signature is on it, and I do not care if it's mine and I do not care if it's a Liberal signature. I care if it's a good deal for Newfoundland and Labrador.

In this role as Opposition Leader, despite the fact that they don't appreciate that we're

asking questions to help them, we will continue to ask those questions and we will continue to do our best to make sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians get not only the best deal on this, but the best education, the best health care, the best justice system and the best for everybody that we deserve. That's our job and we'll continue to do it, and we'll never apologize for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

That was a great note to end on. I also want to talk about the MOU a little bit. I wasn't here when the MOU was debated. I wasn't here in 1969. I never got to meet Joey. But regardless of what we think of this, I think we all have a lot more shared goals than sometimes the rhetoric indicates. I think we all want a deal, like the leader just said.

I read the report that was presented on Tuesday. I want to be clear, first of all, I know that it's been couched as an independent report; it's not an independent review. We know that there were biases going into this, and do you know what? That's okay, but I don't understand why we're trying to sell it as such. We know certain members of that Review Committee had a predetermined view of the MOU, but —

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. PARSONS: What?

AN HON. MEMBER: So did Dennis Browne.

J. PARSONS: I don't know Dennis Browne. I wasn't here then, but —

AN HON. MEMBER: You know what I'm talking about.

J. PARSONS: Yes, I know. That's fine, but here's what's –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. PARSONS: Here's what's interesting.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Please address the Chair.

J. PARSONS: Even though we knew that this was a hand-picked panel, they could not be dishonest or overly dramatic in their assessment and they didn't stand before the public to make a political defence of their opinion in person.

What it produced, as I read it, is a series of proposed changes to the MOU and definitely not a recommendation to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I'm going to just read you some parts of that report. Again, it was a very interesting read.

It said, "The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has several important aspects that are beneficial for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Despite these benefits, however, the IRC finds, based on the evidence it has reviewed, that the MOU as currently configured is not in the overall best long-term interest of the people of the province."

It went on to say, "In our view, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has several significant decisions to make that could ultimately make the MOU serve the public interest." Okay? That's not, to me, saying toss it and move on.

How do we know that there could be a better deal? Of course, there has to be negotiation. Certain aspects of the review speculate that we could take a better position, but it doesn't know that until we talk with Quebec. There's definitely not any smoking gun in the review. In fact, much of the review acknowledges the positive aspects of the MOU.

For example, "The MOU sets out a unique, flexible block-pricing framework for Churchill Falls power. Rather than stipulating a fixed price (as did the 1969 contract), prices are intended to adjust over time in accordance with a basket of external energy cost and price indices, the largest block of which has a proposed adjustment for Consumer Price Index inflation to protect real values over the term of the new PPAs."

Despite the rhetoric we hear about 1969, clearly, from that aspect, this is not like 1969 and the review acknowledges that.

"As it now exists, the MOU does offer improved financial and economic benefits to the province. It increases the price of Churchill Falls power that the Churchill Falls (Labrador) Company sells above the current contracted price before 2041, and the forecasted price for Churchill Falls power after 2041 is reasonable (subject to the improvements in timing of payments) compared to HQ's forecast cost of alternative sources of supply." Okay, reasonable.

"A key benefit of the MOU is that it increases NLH's allocation of power from the existing Churchill Falls facility by up to 605 MW before 2041, more than doubling the current amount it accesses The IRC understands that this additional 605 MW would be fully utilized before 2041 and that it could support significant economic development, including expansion of the mining sector in Labrador, which is an important contributor to provincial GDP, taxes and royalties, and employment."

Again, this does not match up with the rhetoric that we're hearing from the other side, that there was nothing here for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The conclusion section of the report outlines four specific issues that the authors had issues with. "The first and most important issue is identifying how value for the province should be created from the low-

cost, dispatchable, clean power produced at Churchill Falls. There are two ways to generate value from such a resource: it can be exported to the highest price available – providing financial value – or it can be retained in the province for use by energy-intensive industries, and thereby also create broader economic value (as industrial companies invest, operate and grow).”

Now, this is a philosophical difference. Now, this is a core difference in terms of the balance of how much we sell power for, versus how much power we use ourselves.

Some people wanted to develop more business, develop more industry with the power from Churchill Falls. Some would rather sell it and mitigate risk, not take risks, just sell the power, and there’s somewhere in between.

The last time we got into the power game, we didn’t work with Quebec and we did everything on our own. As we heard earlier in Question Period, I think the quote is: Go it alone. The MOU had significant opportunities for us to acquire more power, but if we wanted to negotiate more, we could do so. Again, I’m not hearing a deal breaker here.

“The second key issue regarding Churchill River projects is the question of whether it is in the best long-term public interest for NLH to expand its joint ownership relationship with HQ through a new, 60/40 joint venture for the Gull Island project.” Again, it’s a philosophical difference. But the authors are speculating on whether or not such possibility existed. What did Quebec want? Would Quebec go for a public-private partnership? They don’t know this. They don’t know what was gone into this MOU.

“The third key issue with the MOU relates to how the negotiation process between NHL and HQ was overseen.” Now this amount of oversight – and I’m curious to see how government is going to do this. We’re already hearing talks about the Premier

meeting to discuss this. Is it reasonable that government will not be involved with this negotiation? How much will they be involved? Again, it doesn’t sound radical to me. It doesn’t sound a radical departure or a 1969 agreement-type MOU, does it?

Then the fourth issue has to do with a disagreement about how the financial benefits should be obtained. “The fourth key issue with the MOU concerns the short-term financial benefits to NL that could be obtained from Churchill Falls under a new power purchase agreement. Currently, the CF plant has no long-term debt, which creates a significant yet unrealized financing opportunity for CFLCo. NLH’s expert advisors estimated the CF balance sheet could support approximately \$8 billion of new long-term debt under the MOU’s proposed new Churchill Falls PPA. If the CF Upgrades and CF Expansion projects were financed on a stand-alone basis – not on the basis of the CF balance sheet as proposed in the MOU – this debt, supported by a renewed PPA, could provide NLH and HQ with an immediate enhanced dividend payment of up to \$8 billion.”

Again, this is about timing of benefits. There are certainly benefits to taking that dividend early versus spreading it over time, I understand that. Again, this is something that can be negotiated. This is not a deal breaker, I don’t think.

It’s obvious from this – even this review that we knew was biased – it is measured in its criticism. It differs immensely from the melodramatic rhetoric that we’re hearing here in the House. The fact that the Premier has appointed the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro back again to negotiate, indicates that the MOU is not the worst deal in the world. In fact, it is the basis. The work has been done to get us to this point.

So, again, like the Leader of the Opposition, I do hope that government is able to push this forward and find a way to get revenue. I

know the Finance Minister could use some extra dollars, there is no doubt, but I don't think there's anything in this report that says the previous government was selling us down the river, so to speak. Not at all.

The second issue I want to speak about today – I know we're getting to a point where it's almost time for us to say goodbye until tomorrow – tomorrow, Monday, of course, I want to talk about Municipal Infrastructure.

I'm going to, first of all, say to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that I empathize with the challenge that he faces here. It is difficult sometimes getting money spent. I understand that this challenge has been communicated by Municipal Infrastructure in communities for years, especially small communities.

Small communities have infrastructure needs, but they sometimes don't have the engineering and administrative support required to get engineering work done: tenders prepared, supervision services acquired, reports filed with TI to get contractors their money. There are often few choices for municipalities when it comes to engineering consultants because of consolidations in the industry.

Years ago, communities would develop a relationship with a consultant who would act on sort of a retainer. They would help them. They knew that down the road they would get design work and they would get supervision work in return. They would help the communities do preliminary estimates and prepare funding submissions free of charge to get that. Now, because of procurement rules, that can't be done anymore. I'm sure that Municipal Infrastructure is aware of that problem.

When I talked to MNL before this session, the biggest issue they said, unprompted, was with municipal Multi-Year Capital Works. They were concerned about changes coming and they weren't going to

be consulted. Now, something was said in the blue book. "Municipal leaders say they don't feel listened to ... they feel ignored. A Wakeham PC government will show respect to municipal leaders. We will listen to them, support them, and help them implement the local solutions their community needs."

There was a meeting before the budget and I know that the department met and informed MNL of what the new regime would look like.

SPEAKER: I just want to remind the speaker that we don't use names in the House of Assembly. It's by position and district.

J. PARSONS: Oh, sorry.

SPEAKER: Thank you. You can carry on.

J. PARSONS: I missed that. Sorry.

SPEAKER: That's okay.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible book).

SPEAKER: Unless he's reading from *Hansard*, I think.

AN HON. MEMBER: I bring a book in every day.

J. PARSONS: It is a quote.

SPEAKER: Okay, my apologies.

J. PARSONS: Well, again, there was information presented to MNL, but there wasn't consultation on this.

So 50 communities were taken out of the Multi-Year Capital Works, seven got left in, but with significantly less money. Now, I don't disagree. Like I said early on, I don't disagree with the minister, the challenge of getting money out in some communities, but I don't think this wholesale approach is the best option. Again, from the blue book: "Pursue a multi-year planning approach for

infrastructure including roads, water, sewer, and recreational facilities.”

Talking to MNL – and I know the minister also talked to MNL early on and I’m sure that they did talk about – they also prepare – and I know in preparation for the campaign, people talked to MNL – that multi-year capital funding is very important. There are challenges for doing infrastructure projects in communities, but the challenges are different for everyone. Sometimes it’s hard to get a consultant. Sometimes it’s a lack of administrative capacity to manage tenders. Certain times, there’s difficulty dealing with regional engineers or paperwork involved with municipal infrastructure.

As a mayor of a large municipality, we had conflicts with regional engineers trying to micro-manage our projects. We have an engineering department, accountants and lawyers. The resources could have been better used on smaller communities.

There was also inconsistent timing for intake for Multi-Year Capital Works. For the 2023 program, money didn’t get approved until August of ’21. Then it was back on track for ’23-’26; the money was approved in September of ’23. There should be a 2026-2029 program with project approval this summer, but instead there’s a 2027-31 program with project approval in the summer of 2027. The ability of municipalities to spend Multi-Year Capital funding was not the same, and we shouldn’t treat it the same.

This spring, when a letter came out saying that there were going to be changes, it said your community has unspent funds. It also said: My department has been advised of delays in payments being made to consultants.

I checked with Corner Brook and sought, are you really having trouble paying consultants? Are you having trouble spending or allocating your money? Of

course they didn’t. The city has all but \$66 allocated – \$66 out of \$4.5 million. They had no problems with contractors.

The letter was sent to 22 municipalities, but it didn’t apply to all municipalities and that’s what’s going on here too. We’re taking a one-size-fits-all approach when we know that this is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Many of the communities cut from the program felt it was valuable to them, and they had a few problems getting money out. Before the election, the PC Party understood that municipalities wanted multi-year funding, so what’s changed? We’ve reduced the number of municipalities on multi-year now.

I think the department and the minister should go back and just have a look, take a fine-toothed comb approach to this instead of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, which of these 15 are still able to administer multi-year funding, because some of them definitely are. Is there a way to cut the red tape of the funding programs or reform it to reduce the administrative burden to these small communities?

Can we come up with a new procurement arrangement to make PCAs and contracts earlier – easier too? Maybe there’s a way to utilize regional service boards to share consulting services among smaller communities? I know that happens in Nova Scotia.

I noticed that in the letter telling the remaining municipalities in the program that they qualified, it indicated that the funding had to be self-administered. Now, that’s one good thing that comes out of this. I think some of the larger municipalities self-administer their funds. They don’t need the support and help of the regional engineers to the same extent. So there is a possibility. There are good things here. I would urge the minister to just take a second look.

One big thing that municipalities are complaining about is the gap – the gap that

we're going to have now because of the intake not happening until April 1, 2027. I think looking at that gap and getting the intake done this year would be a really good way to mitigate the effects. The communities that are still remaining in the program don't have a challenge as such when it comes to getting money or to the same extent that smaller communities do. I think that would be a very effective way to fix the issue.

So I think that I would urge the minister to look at that and, again, I want to see a positive solution here. I don't want to just be critical. I do want to find a way. I hope that the minister is able to meet with the Municipal and Community Affairs Minister, with MNL and these communities and come up with a solution here so that we can get some much-needed work done this season.

Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Public Procurement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's almost like you know where to start because I've been sitting a lot more than I've normally sat in this House, so it's strange sometimes but it's interesting because I actually listen more, so that's a good thing.

I guess I'd like to start off by some commentary on the Leader of the Opposition's discussion on the MOU and the review and what have you. He is right; we did spend a lot of time talking previous to and during that debate. As Opposition House Leader at the time, and he was Government House Leader, that was a very strategic discussion, the preparations, and we did do a lot of back and forth. For the most part, it was pretty good conversation.

For the four days of that debate, it was a long debate and it was intense debate, but I thought it was a decent debate. We had an opportunity to come into the House of Assembly and there was a lot of questions put forward. But I guess the missing point, and it seems like we get misrepresented a lot, is the fact that you left the House and you didn't vote. I know the Leader of the Third Party likes to use it a lot, the Leader of the Opposition do and all Members opposite do.

So that everyone knows to abstain from a vote in the House of Assembly, you can't sit in your seat, you can't say we don't vote, you have to physically leave the House of Assembly. The optics of that can look what it looks, but I make no apologies – hear me loud, and no one this side of the House that was here in January '25, we make no apologies for leaving the House of Assembly that night and not voting.

As a matter of fact, October 14 proved if we were right or wrong there, and to further add to that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: Some Members find it funny.

To add further to that, the report that got released there on Tuesday confirms we were right. I make no apologies for doing what's right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Is that a difficult situation? Yes, it is.

I remember leaving the House of Assembly that night. I drove home and I got in my driveway, and I had emails from constituents. Some were supporters and some pretended to be my supporters but, regardless, they were my constituents and they were concerned.

I responded to each one of them as respectfully as I could, but I explained our situation. I explained why we did what we did, but I never waffled. I've never waffled since. I've never waffled before. I stayed firm to what I believed in, and it is what we all believed as a party. We carried forth under the leadership of our Premier who stood tall, and we were adamant we could not support this MOU as it stood without a proper independent review.

We were heard on October 14. The public agreed with us that they needed more.

I went door to door –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Burgeo - La Poile to let me hear the speaker. What we went through this afternoon, there needs to be a little bit more respect in this House.

Thank you.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

When I went around knocking doors during the previous election, that's when you get your real feel for what's on the street. You hear it from day to day when you're out and around your community, but you really get it at the doors.

When I went around to the doors, people asked all kinds of questions. They asked, why did you walk out? You explain it – okay, that makes sense. But do you know what the number one concern of people at the doors was? They know it's a very important issue, but they were concerned about the MOU, what it stood for and what was in it. They weren't comfortable.

And they weren't comfortable. Let's be honest, on October 14, they proved they were not comfortable. You have an Opposition that are there now that was the

former government, that threw everything in – and they're still doing it – all in on the MOU. The MOU, the MOU, it's the best thing ever. That's their strategy. I mean, obviously it wasn't a winning strategy, but that's their strategy and continues to be their strategy.

Again, that's fine. That's their prerogative. I'm not questioning that, but we're being questioned every day in the House of Assembly. We were the ones that won on October 14. We were being questioned on our stance on this MOU. Just remember something, Speaker, we've heard all kinds of waffling on the other side. They don't know if it's a deal. They didn't know if it was an MOU. I heard the Leader of the Opposition the other day, saying, well, we got the framework, we're going to support them to try to get through a deal.

They had money. There was money allotted. They had money spent. They had hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars allotted out in fiscal framework for money we never received. So called; it wasn't a deal but they had the money put in the budget.

Think about that. Outside of tobacco taxes and other stuff that should never have been there, they actually had money – we never had this money but they put it in the budget because it made the numbers look good. It made everyone feel good.

What we were faced with in January 2025, that was theatrics to try to win an election. Did anyone over there on the other side – the Premier asked this today and I'm going to ask it again: Did anyone think about the 2 per cent, the escalator clause, and what that was going to cost us at the end of 50 years? Did anyone even know that was there? We asked a lot of questions, but we had trouble finding that information. We were concerned. That's going to cost the people of the province \$30 billion. Actually, in excess of \$30 billion. Think about that. That was done through political interference.

Another point I want to make. I heard the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, yesterday, I believe it was, he made reference to one of the people on the panel that was shooting their mouth off. Personally speaking, I think it probably should have been called out, it's very inappropriate. I don't know this person. I know this name. I don't even know what he looks like, I don't think.

Obviously, they put him there on the panel. They've got high regard for him. They thought he was good, but because he didn't like the political interference, because he couldn't stand it under that pressure when the terms of reference got changed and he had to be dictated from the eighth floor, he had to walk away. He made it public. He was under an NDA so he couldn't disclose anything. He walked away, but that was very damaging to the governing party, very damaging. I acknowledge that.

It wasn't good to be governing party. That was the worst thing could happen because this person – we didn't know who he was but he had credibility. He had credibility to the public and he had credibility to me, and we don't know who he is. He never said anything, all he said was he couldn't carry on and, basically, he had to remove himself.

We find out now it was because it was political interference. That's what happened. That's why this person had to walk away. You've got to respect that, but to hear a Member in this House of Assembly stand in this place, yesterday, which I heard the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, stand in his place and say shoot his mouth off.

Do you know why he said that? Because there's a lot of bitterness there because he feels he hurt their cause of getting elected. He was a part of the reason they're no longer on this side of the House.

Speaker, do you know what I want to say is the reason why they're not on this side of

the House, is because making decisions they made, the people of the province seen it and the people of the province decided which side of the House they belong on and it's that side. They're sitting there now. Now, we get faced with it every day, it's almost like – you feel sometimes in here, what I see every day, there's a lot of anger.

The tension in this room – and people can laugh – I've been here for 11 years and there are a few of you over there going here with me but most of you haven't. I've sat in this House of Assembly and we've had a lot of battles. I know the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, he's been here longer than all of us and he's had many battles. But I'm telling you the level of distain in this House now is beyond. A lot of that is bitterness.

I'm sorry, but the reality is the voters always speak. The voters are never wrong. I lost a by-election. I said when I lost the by-election it was a heartbreak and it was a low amount of votes. The electorate are never wrong. The electorate are never wrong. It hurt me, it killed me, it upset me, but I had to say it and I stand by it, the electorate are never wrong. As luck had it, I was successful in the next election.

I came in this House of Assembly in 2015; seven Members left from a governing party. The people spoke and they were right. Speaker, 31 seats; there were seven. I was one of the seven. I was a new Member at the time. There were 19 new Liberal Members and I was the one new PC Member. I was sitting with the former premier, ministers, they weren't happy, but you accept your fate.

We got up and we debated. I didn't mind, I was new, but the other Members they got up and I knew they struggled but they accepted their fate and they done what they had to do, represented the people who put them here. They carried on with that representation until they found other ways over the next number of years. That's

what's expected of you in this House of Assembly.

What I've seen here now, I wonder are we debating an MOU? Are we debating Multi-Year Capital Works? Trying to get the topic out. The anger that comes with it, the distain, the comments I've had said to me on a personal level and the social media stuff that comes my way, I'm like, really?

Have we done anything that wrong, other than the fact we put our hands up, we got nominated, we went out and we knocked doors and the people of the province decided each individual one of us over here, the 21 of us here, deserve to be where we're to. We formed the government and we're left with a big task. We are willing to carry it out to the best of our abilities and we will – we will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: But to be in this House, day in, day out, day in, day out, I'm seeing it.

When I was on the other side, I was the Opposition House Leader, it comes with the territory, you're on your feet a lot, it comes with it. I was the senior man. You carried a lot of that stuff, which I see every day now with our House Leaders. That comes with the territory.

It's not easy. It's not easy on any side of this House. But we have to try to be respectful. If you're not, if you cross the line, there's nothing wrong with apologizing. There's absolutely nothing wrong with apologizing.

Did I ever come over and shake hands with ministers on this side? Absolutely. I actually had a good relationship with most of them, because there are times you get in heated debate and you acknowledge it and there might be a phone call. There was lots of that happening. I'm okay with that. I'm okay with people misspeaking, totally, but it's not personal.

Sometimes in there it gets very personal. I've been called despicable by Members in this House, and I don't know if anyone knows me very good, but I didn't get called despicable a whole lot in my life. Do I irritate people? You know I do. Do I annoy people when I get going? Yes, I do. Am I denying that? No, I'm not. Am I determined? Yeah. Am I strong willed? You better believe it. But I'm not despicable. I don't think anyone in this House is despicable.

Just because I'm on this side of the House and you want to be on this side of the House and the electorates spoke, that don't make me despicable. That's democracy, Speaker. That's democracy and that's what needs to happen more in this House. But there's not enough of it here; I see it every day. I don't stand up every day, I'm contained. I try to be contained. I'm doing my best to be contained. But sometimes I hear a lot of the stuff, the rhetoric that goes on in here, I've got to say it.

I never got up to get on this tangent, but it's an important point I'm making. This is not meant to be confrontational. This is meant for all of us in this House. We're on this side of the House. We see it. I've seen a Member, the Leader of the Third Party, get up every day and criticize us for leaving the House. He knows why we left the House. He knows why we left. But he stood up and supported the MOU with the previous government, the government at the time, because he believed that was the right thing to do. We didn't.

These were decisions you make. Life is about decisions. All this stuff is about decisions. Obviously, it was the wrong decision. So don't go looking at us now because we made the smartest move, we made the right move and now we're carrying on, making the right decisions. You can't cry over spilled milk because you made that decision. Life goes on.

But I want to get to a point. The Leader of the Opposition made it and I think there's clarity required here.

During the January debate, as House Leader, I was constantly in the talks with him and a couple of his colleagues, no longer here and I'll leave them alone. They wanted us to vote in favour of the MOU, vote in favour of the independent Review Committee and what have you. I would never do it. We would never do it. Me and the current Premier, the leader at the time, we could not agree to it. We would not agree. There were levels we would go.

It's in *Hansard*, so what I'm saying, I've said it several times in the House, I did say to the Leader of the Opposition, who also relayed it to the premier of the day: If you let Justice LeBlanc look after the independent review and let him pick the people and let him oversee it, and come back and debate the findings at the time – that was the agreement we were under – we would have supported the MOU at the time to go to that next step; not to accept the MOU as it was, to go through that review process, if they were willing to do that.

I thought that was a fair compromise. That's what happened behind the scenes that you don't hear in here. We get referred that we left the House. No, we couldn't vote for or against something that we fundamentally disagreed with. We never knew enough about it to vote against it and we didn't agree with the independent review to vote for it. We were in a tough situation. We made that decision and stood by it. I tell you now, politically, it's probably one of the best decisions we ever made.

So when the Leader of the Opposition gets up and makes those comments, it's not always factual in this House, unfortunately, and words matter, full statements matter and sentences matter. Chopping off half of what you say – the Member for Corner Brook got up and he starts cherry-picking. Sure, there's good stuff in everything. No

matter what you do, no matter how bad something is, there's good in everything. You weren't around when the upper Churchill was signed.

Ironically, there's no one here on this side of the House that was around when Muskrat was signed, but we hear in this House of Assembly day in, day out, day in, day out the same nonsense about Muskrat Falls. Why would we not throw back to you about Joey? Absolutely.

I know it really irritates them, every time the words "Joey's Liberals" comes up. It gets a lot of anger across the way, but do you know what? That's the sport of it, isn't it? We've been listening to it for years and years and years in this House about Muskrat Falls, Muskrat Falls, Muskrat Falls. Sure, no one in this House here voted for Muskrat Falls, not that it's a bad dig by the way. There are elements of Muskrats Falls that are very good.

Hydro told us, they sat here in the House of Assembly, it's the best project they got, Muskrat Falls. Am I not right? I think it's the best project Hydro on record right now.

AN HON. MEMBER: We own it.

B. PETTEN: And we actually own it. We actually own the rights, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: A billion dollars a year (inaudible).

B. PETTEN: See how quick they chime in with the amounts?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: Yes.

They're all on cue. Someone must be hitting the button – bang. That's what it is, like a little buzzer goes off and they all stand up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, facts still matter. We are very proud of what we've done. We're a very proud government, actually, because we feel very good about what we're doing and the direction we're leading this province. We're not afraid to make decisions. They may not be popular, but, as my colleague, the Minister of Finance, always says, we want to make smart decisions, spend money wisely and be smart about how we do things.

Will that always be to everyone's satisfaction? No. But in my opinion, I really believe you can't make good decisions without being bold.

Are they bold? They're bold. But I tell you, the people of the province are noticing. They like the fact that we're not afraid to make a decision. They like the fact of our delivering a decision and we're making our minds up because that's long overdue. It's not about winning the next election. It's not about winning the next by-election. It's about doing what's right.

We sat here, I sat here and my colleagues sat here for years watching what we didn't agree with. But it's a great feeling when you get on this side and you can actually affect difference.

I was critic for this department I'm minister of now for seven years. I did seven or eight Estimates over 11 years. I was the critic for Health, too, but I spent a lot of time – I used to come back and do the Estimates in Transportation as MHA during Estimates.

Being here now, I've seen a lot of issues within the department and I wanted to change them. I'm actually making that difference. It's a good feeling. Actually, a lot of people in the department are happy that's being done. There's nothing wrong with change.

So what I say to the Members opposite, they get up and they're always throwing stuff back and forth. Embrace it – embrace

it. Had you done the right changes, you may not have ended up on the other side. Had you made the decisions, not political decisions, had you made the right decisions, you wouldn't be over there today.

In my last couple of minutes, I want to address the MYCW issue that the Member for Corner Brook keeps bringing up. That, again, is about being smart, making smart decisions.

In 2007, that program started with seven municipalities under that Multi-Year Capital Works. It ballooned to 22. It was never intended for 22 municipalities. It was meant for the seven largest municipalities, which, actually, Corner Brook is still on that. So I don't know why he's fixated on that.

MNL were consulted, if I'm not mistake, I think it was four times they left, for some reason there were two they never mentioned about. I met with them another time. They got an advanced preview of the budget.

I have no idea what MNL's goal is but we made a decision and we're standing by our decision. We're united on that decision because it's the right decision to do, spending more wisely. It's \$40 million on the books we still got to try to get out the door.

We are going to get some earlier approvals out so money can get out the door in a timely manner in 2027. I've talked to different municipalities about that. But I make no apologies, once again, for doing what we feel and I feel is the right decision.

This was a flawed, a deeply flawed program. It's been flawed for years on end. Could I have went in and said, yeah, okay, let's go and do it. Give this one that, give that one this. No, it was wrong. I always knew it was wrong. But having the guts to do that is a different thing.

Of those 22 municipalities, people want to know, it's supposed to be for the seven

largest, it ballooned to 22. One of those towns had 1,600. There was one municipality in that list that had 1,600. There are a lot of small populations there. They were put there for political reasons. That wasn't the idea of this program.

This program was not designed for political. There were no parameters. We should never have programs with no parameters, no transparency. There had to be a formula. There was none of that, but it has a formula now, it has transparency, it has guidelines and it's spending money right. It's spending money wisely is what we've committed to when we got elected April 14, 2025, and we'll continue to commit to as we move on year over year and the people of the province will benefit from it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Scio are you speaking to a point of order or something?

S. STOODLEY: Point of privilege.

SPEAKER: Go ahead.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege concerning the conduct of the Member for Lake Melville. My submission constitutes an attempt to intimidate Members of the House in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

I was just made aware that the Member for Lake Melville shared on social media a post stating: "Every Liberal MHA in Newfoundland & Labrador deserves a good shit knocking for considering signing that MOU."

I say, Mr. Speaker, it's amplification of language advocating violence against elected Members of this House because of a position they may take on public business before the Legislature.

We have parliamentary privilege, as you know, protects Members from intimidation, obstruction, interference in carrying out their responsibilities. We have to be free to debate, vote and represent our constituents without fear of threats or calls for physical violence.

When a Member of this House shares or endorses content suggesting MHAs be physically assaulted over their stance on legislation or of policy, it creates precisely the kind of poisoned atmosphere it is intended to guard against.

Speaker, there's a clear line between criticism and incitement and sharing a post calling for fellow MHAs to receive a good shit knocking crosses the line entirely.

I ask that you find that a minimum of prima facie case of breach of privilege and contempt of this House and I ask the Member for Lake Melville to apologize unreservedly to all Members of this House of Assembly.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure; Deputy Premier.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I'd first like to know if the Member opposite would table her cellphone because that is the document she is reading from. She read directly from her phone, so would she table the phone? It's in the *Standing Orders*.

Speaker –

SPEAKER: I would have to take that one under advisement, to be honest with you. This is a new one on me. Just take a seat for a second.

Clerk, can I confer with you for a second, please.

The Member doesn't have to go tabling her phone. I just wanted to make there wasn't something I was missing.

Go ahead.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I just actually spoke –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member had his speaking privileges revoked, so I would ask you not to speak.

The hon. the Deputy Premier. This has been a long day.

B. PETTEN: It has so, Speaker. Thank you.

I just went through it when I spoke on my time on the subamendment. I spoke about some of the stuff that's going on in this House and I spoke to you about both directly, indirectly and what have you. That stuff you're talking about on social media – and, look, he shared something by accident. We've spoke about this and it was there. I think it's all taken down now, as a matter of fact.

That happens. It was one of those things, but we've got all kinds of examples and we're talking about the high road – we had a private Member's resolution yesterday, as a Member on the opposite side had a poem up berating our Premier and calling him by his first name.

I try to be as respectful here as I can, Speaker, and I'm doing my best, but I think this cannot go unnoticed, unreported either. We've got the other side, one after another, it's point of order, point of order, point of privilege, point of order. Fair game; that's their right. They're Members of this House and we've all got that right, but it's got to be both ways.

I mean, this gentleman, the Member for Lake Melville made a mistake, he acknowledged and took it down. This Member opposite has kept that up for days after days – I point out I don't know if it is up now. I think it's not satisfactory and it's not kosher in this House to be letting that stuff happen over and over again. They see nothing wrong with it, yet when some Member opposite makes – in this case, it was a mistake.

We heard earlier today, our Government House Leader was called out for something put on his Facebook that's been going on forever. I've had my spot in this House, stood here and they chopped everything I said from House of Assembly footage. I've had that happen.

I don't share that stuff to my Facebook. On Facebook, I just put about my grandchildren up or a notice or some more high-level thing. But if you want to go in the gutter and take someone I've got immense respect for and be calling him by his first name, listen here, I tell everyone in this province, you're the Premier of the province; you should be addressed by the Premier of the province. We only have one Premier and he's Premier of the day and he should be addressed as Premier, not by your first name. It's disrespectful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: As a Member of this House –

SPEAKER: I would ask the Member to get to the point of privilege. I get your point.

B. PETTEN: My point is we're getting up here now and we've got another point of privilege. Speaker, I'm imploring on you, as Speaker, and asking you, as Speaker of this House, this has got to come to an end. There's got to be an end there. Because this is a two-way street. This has to end somewhere. We can't be at this constantly every day. It's not fair to any Member in the House, none of us in the House. There is no

one benefiting from this. We're getting up and it's getting into a tit-for-tat.

If you're going to get up and call that a point of privilege on an error and we have people in this House sitting back and getting off scot-free with calling our Premier by their first name and ridiculing him on Facebook and that's okay, it's not okay with me and it's not okay with side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before I recognize a Member, are you speaking to this particular point of privilege or this is a new point?

B. DAVIS: No, absolutely.

SPEAKER: Okay, go ahead.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, this is a simple thing. If it was made in error, like the hon. Member had just mentioned, then it's a simple apology, isn't it? There's a far cry from calling the Premier by their first name in a social media post. Fair, I can understand the Member being disappointed maybe, but there's a far cry from inciting –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. DAVIS: It's a far cry –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. DAVIS: It is a far cry, Mr. Speaker, from calling someone by their first name than inciting violence. We've seen it on January 6 in the United States that was done. We've seen what can happen when politicians incite that.

I'm not suggesting that it was done purposely. I'm not saying that at all. What I'm saying is we've identified that. I think it's incumbent upon all of us to be the bigger people here and apologize for doing something that was in error. If it was an error, there's no issue.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party to the point of privilege.

J. DINN: Look, I've sat here and this has been one acrimonious session. We've sat here and we've listened, my colleague and I, and we don't engage in the chirping and the back and forth.

I understand in the thrust, like good debate, strong debate, it's acceptable. I'm sure there are plenty of things that are said about me on social media. I don't follow it, except every now and again, like I said, I may very well go in and poke the bear but, for the most part, I ignore it.

I will say this, it crosses the line when there's a threat of encouraging physical violence, whether it's meant in humour or not. Five, 10 years ago, I probably would have said, okay, we know it's a Newfoundland saying or whatever else, but in this day and age where we have social media and algorithms that just feed into it as well, and we see what's happening in the States and other countries, we can't be part of that. Maybe it's a faint line in the sand, but we do not cross it.

We have a lot of things that are said that I personally disagree with, but it should never come to the stage where it results in physical violence. It's interesting, Speaker, that in this House of Assembly there's a reason for the Whip, so people wouldn't be at sword lengths. So it comes from that. We shouldn't be going backwards.

I have great respect for your situation, coming from a teaching point of view of trying to control a class, but we are all adults in this place. Many of us have had

careers beforehand. We come from backgrounds where we were respected leaders in our community and our organizations. I think it's upon each of us, but I really have a problem whether if it's a joke – and in this day and age, it's not a joke anymore.

I do not want to be in a situation where I'm out in public or a colleague here in this House is in public and somehow, they are under threat. Keep in mind that the previous premier had a protest outside his house so, at some point, this has to stop. We have one week left. Maybe we need to just take a few steps back over this weekend and breathe a bit, but I'm hoping that when we come back in the fall, we won't be dealing with this.

But right now for this, to me, it crosses a line. When you go to that stage of threatening violence, no matter if it's – and I can't say it's a mistake because we have control over our own words. All I'm asking here is could we settle this down a bit and could we, please, realize that there are lines that we should not cross?

This worries me. I have not said much about it on previous points of privilege, but this one is troubling.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

K. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this point of privilege here, I don't know what to say here.

I tell you one thing, I said “ha ha” on Facebook to a post that hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians found hilarious, as did I. It used old terminology and it meant nothing. It was not inciteful. It was not my words. As soon as I said, “ha ha” and realized that at the same time I shared that post, not a matter of minutes went by before – and I admitted that. I talked to CBC on the very thing today. I said

I admitted that. Not a couple of minutes went by when I realized, that's not appropriate for me to be sharing. I took that down.

But what's on trial here, my sense of humour? What's next? Religion, no freedom of thought, no freedom of speech. My sense of humour cannot be judged. It is mine and it's rightfully mine. I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker, humour and the ability to laugh at ourselves and each other has been the cornerstone of this province and our heritage because nobody tells a joke like a Newfoundlander and Labradorian and nobody enjoys one like that either.

But to bring it into this House and suggest that I'm inciting violence against anybody opposite here – madness. It's madness, I say, Mr. Speaker. I won't have my character besmudged and be put into the dirt and into the ditches by somebody trying to go for political gain against something as small as having a sense of humour, along with hundreds and hundreds of other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Speaker.

So what's next, my sense of humour? I can't have a sense of humour. I can't be Roman Catholic. I can't have free speech, Mr. Speaker.

I say that's deplorable and if anybody thinks that I'm out inciting violence, if that's what you think, well, I'm just going to tell you that I'm sorry that the act, a small mistake, made that happened. But I tell you what won't be done, I won't be dragged through the mud and I won't be spat upon in that sense from people across the way for having a sense of humour.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I think I would be remiss if I didn't start off by saying that today has been an example of – well, I don't know – the way we

shouldn't be doing things, the way we should not be operating. It's a very disappointing day to say the very least.

On this particular point that has been raised, point of privilege, again, I don't want to go making knee-jerk reactions to this because it is a very serious matter being raised. I've heard all sides. I will review the matter, take everything under consideration and rule accordingly.

I will say, though, that we've addressed this whole issue of social media and it really is – I will emphasize once again – it really is something I feel needs to be looked at by the Privileges and Elections Committee in terms of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Without making a ruling right now, I would also say that activity on social media, not in this House of Assembly, unless it's actually taking place – if you're making a video or posting a picture of something in this House, then it becomes a House matter, even if it didn't happen while the House is in session, per se. When you're making posts out there that is not part of House proceedings, it's not taking place in the precinct of the House, then I'm not certain that I have much jurisdiction to deal with it and really, it's something that belongs, in my opinion, with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards through a complaint process here.

That would be my thought but, again, I have heard everything everyone had to say and I will formalize that decision at a later date.

Thank you.

The hon. the Deputy Government Huse Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that we now adjourn debate on Motion 1.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that we now adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn, but before I adjourn, however, Members are reminded of the following meetings of Standing Committees to review Estimates.

The Social Services Committee will meet in the Chamber tonight to consider the Estimates of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; the Government Services Committee will meet in the Chamber tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. to consider the Estimates of the Department of Finance, the Public Service Commission and Consolidated Funds Services; and the Social Services Committee will meet on Monday morning, May 25, at 9 a.m., to consider the Estimates of the Department of Seniors.

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 is carried.

This House do now stand adjourned until tomorrow, being Monday, May 25, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

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