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- **THURSDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2025**

The Speaker took the Chair at 3 p.m.

KARAKIA/PRAYERS

SPEAKER: Almighty God, we give thanks for the blessings which have been bestowed on us. Laying aside all personal interests, we acknowledge the King and pray for guidance in our deliberations, that we may conduct the affairs of this House with wisdom, justice, mercy, and humility for the welfare and peace of New Zealand. Amen.

- **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House): Today, the House will adjourn until Tuesday, 4 November.

Hon Tama Potaka: Yay!

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: Indeed. That week, the House will consider the Education and Training Amendment Bill (No 2), the Medicines Amendment Bill, and the Land Transport Management (Time of Use Charging) Amendment Bill. Wednesday morning will see extended hours for the consideration of Treaty of Waitangi settlement legislation. On Thursday, there'll be extended hours for Government business, and, in the afternoon, Mike Davidson MP will deliver his maiden statement, and there'll have a one-hour special debate on the report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on its inquiry into banking competition.

- **PETITIONS, PAPERS, SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS, AND INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

SPEAKER: No petitions have been presented to the Clerk for presentation. Ministers have delivered five papers.

CLERK:

- The 2024-25 annual reports of:
 - the Broadcasting Standards Authority
 - New Zealand On Air, and
 - the Registrar of the Environment Court
 - the 2025-26 statements of performance expectations for the:
 - Broadcasting Standards Authority, and
 - New Zealand On Air.
-

SPEAKER: I present the 2025–2030 Strategic Intentions of the Office of the Ombudsman. Those papers are published under the authority of the House. Five select committee reports have been delivered for presentation.

CLERK:

- Reports of the Education and Workforce Committee on:
 - the petition of Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan MP, and
 - the petition of Sophie Liu
 - reports of the Environment Committee on:
 - the briefing on BIOFIN, and
 - the inquiry into seabed mining in New Zealand
 - report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the review briefing on the 2023-24 annual review of New Zealand Green Investment Finance Limited.
-

SPEAKER: The reports on the briefing, the inquiry, and the review briefing are set down for consideration. The Clerk has been informed of the introduction of two bills.

CLERK:

- Deepfake Digital Harm and Exploitation Bill, introduction, and
 - Social Media Age-Restricted Users Bill, introduction.
-

SPEAKER: Those bills are set down for first reading.

• **ORAL QUESTIONS**

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Question No. 1—Internal Affairs

1. TEANAU TUIONO (Green) to the **Minister of Internal Affairs**: How is the Government ensuring that New Zealand's firefighters are properly equipped and resourced to safely respond to fires happening across Aotearoa recently?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR (Deputy Prime Minister): on behalf of the **Minister of Internal Affairs**: I answered a near identical question at great length yesterday, and I would like to refer the member to those answers. I would also like to give thanks to the work of Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) at this very difficult time with several areas under a state of emergency with fires and severe weather. Their work is always invaluable and deeply valued by New Zealanders on a day like today.

Teanau Tuiono: Are firefighters correct when they say they have to work with equipment that consistently breaks down, with no fleet replacement strategy, and are right now across the country putting their safety at risk protecting our communities from severe weather?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Minister of Internal Affairs, I don't believe that that statement is correct. The Government in the last two years has seen FENZ introduce an asset management plan, which had not been put in place, for some reason, between 2017 and 2023 after FENZ was formed from the voluntary and professional wings of New Zealand's firefighting. The replacement schedule for fire appliances I traversed in detail yesterday, but the Government currently has, I believe, 78 appliances on order. They tend to take 18 to 24 months to deliver because they're highly specialised equipment; five of those are aerial. In total, FENZ is spending around \$20 million to \$25 million each year on upgrading fire appliances.

Teanau Tuiono: Is it correct that in the past year the fire truck compliance servicing provider has done 446 emergency callouts, more than one a day, due to breakdowns of the ageing fleet?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Minister of Internal Affairs, I don't have verification of that exact figure in front of me, but it may well be true. There are thousands of fire appliances in New Zealand. Of course, if there was to be one callout for a breakdown each day, then that's something, perhaps, the member could imagine.

Teanau Tuiono: Is it correct that the state of the fire appliances is dire and failing, leaving firefighters stranded on the way to calls, at station, or even at incidents without water while internal firefighting?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Minister of Internal Affairs, no, that characterisation is not correct. I've been advised that, for example, there has only been one recent breakdown that led to a two-minute delay in getting to a fire—

that's in the past several months, at least. So I think the characterisation of routine breakdowns and danger is simply not sustainable. I do note that due to current industrial negotiations, there appears to be a concerted campaign by some in the fire service, and particularly the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union, to try and emphasise any incident and present it as being routine when, in fact, that characterisation is not true.

- **Question No. 2—Prime Minister**

2. Hon CARMEL SEPULONI (Deputy Leader—Labour) to the Prime Minister:
Does he stand by all his Government's statements and actions?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR (Deputy Prime Minister) on behalf of the Prime Minister:
Yes, and I would particularly like to reference the efforts of our Minister for Children, Karen Chhour, in improving the safety of children in residences. That has come down 14 percent in the last two years. It's the first time that there has been a reduction of harm to children in State care, as we understand it, in the country's history. That is really quite an achievement, and a poignant one in the wake of the royal commission, which laid bare the history of brutality that has affected so many people and damaged them for life. This is very good news, and it has come because of a precise and deliberate set of actions by the Minister to improve the quality of staffing, to require staff to wear uniforms, to crack down on contraband—for example, by requiring staff to have clear bags so that they couldn't smuggle contraband in—and by proactively managing behaviour in the sites. All of this has led to a 14 percent reduction in young people being harmed. That is really fixing what matters and is a good example of what the Labour Party should be thinking about.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Does he stand by his statement "We're ready to meet with the unions at any time."; if so, why is Fire and Emergency New Zealand refusing to turn up to scheduled bargaining with the Professional Firefighters Union?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: I certainly do stand by that statement, and I understand that, within 10 minutes of me answering a question on behalf of another Minister yesterday, the Professional Firefighters Union got back in touch, wanting—

Hon Peeni Henare: You corrected it—you corrected yourself.

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: I did. Actually, I was so effective at answering the question, praising these backbone firefighters, that they decided they did want to come back to the table 10 minutes after I answered the question. That's very effective question answering, I have to say.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Why do Government board members deserve an 80 percent pay rise while teachers get an effective pay cut?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: The Government's intention is that when we have serious large assets—for example, I refer to Pharmac; that is something that spends \$2 billion a year, nearly, on medicines for sick New Zealanders. Now, we want to ensure that the governance—the board of that agency—are paid at a rate that is at least almost comparable to what the same directors would get for private sector companies. There's a real contradiction for the Labour Party here: they want the State to do more, they want more Government agencies to do more stuff—to invest in video games, to start sovereign wealth funds—and yet they don't want to pay the people directing these proposed entities, or even the current ones, even nearly as much as directors get in the private sector. That had to be rectified. In relation to teachers, in the last three years, there has been a 14.5 percent increase in pay for teachers. That is a lot more than many of the New Zealanders who are paying the taxes, making arrangements today around the strikes to have someone look after their kids—it's a lot more than they've got lately. For that reason, the Government needs to balance the interests of Kiwis. There needs to be a sense of realism and a connection between those who are paying the taxes and those who are receiving money from the taxpayer.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Why do tobacco companies deserve \$300 million while nurses are being offered an effective pay cut?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: It is simply a mischaracterisation for the Labour Party to say that tobacco companies have been given \$300 million. That simply has not happened. What the Government has done is say that if there is a nicotine-based product that is safer, that has less impact on people's health, and has less impact on the health system, then it should be taxed in proportion to the amount of harm done. Now, the Opposition know this because, when they were in Government, they said there should be zero tax on vapes, because they too subscribed to the principle—although the problem is that they don't know it, because they wouldn't know a principle if they tripped over one.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Why is he willing to spend \$44,000 on a helicopter trip for his Instagram—the equivalent of nine months' base salary for the firefighters he is offering an effective pay cut to?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Prime Minister, this is the problem. You see, the relationship between New Zealand and Australia is one of the most, if not the most, important relationships between two countries anywhere in the world. That's why we have a meeting and actually invest in our relationship between the New Zealand Prime Minister and the Australian Prime Minister. But the Labour Party says it was for Instagram. You see, that's why they think people do politics—for Instagram—and that is the problem with the Labour Party today. That is why they're over there, and we adults are over here.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Should New Zealand workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, and firefighters accept a pay rise below inflation; yes or no?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: The Speaker will tell you that you cannot demand yes or no answers. The simple fact is that this Government is balancing the needs of New Zealanders as patients, as taxpayers, and as public health workers. We have to balance all of these, and the offers that have been put on the table are designed to do that—to bring people together and connect the needs and the means of New Zealanders with the demands and the pressures from union organisers.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: How can he complain about doctors, firefighters, nurses, and teachers unions not acting in good faith when he is threatening to limit their ability to strike because they won't settle for pay rises that don't even match inflation?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: Yesterday, the Prime Minister was asked about this precise matter and said he was not aware that that's what the Government is doing. So, again, this is misinformation from the Opposition.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Why is he not willing to negotiate with teachers, firefighters, and nurses about fair pay but is willing to negotiate a rates rebate on his \$10.5 million mansion?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: A couple of things about that: first of all, the Prime Minister is absolutely willing to negotiate with the unions. In fact, the Government has been saying, through the Public Service Commission, that we are prepared to meet and work through the weekend to get a deal to avoid these strikes. The Government is here making the offers, trying to get the Public Service back to work in order for people to be served and we can make a balanced Budget on behalf of New Zealanders for all of our economic future. Now, on the comment about the Prime Minister's personal capacity and his personal residence, there's no responsibility for that except to say that there is a tone that if someone's worked hard all their life and done well, they should be dragged down and they should be embarrassed about their success and having a nice place on Waiheke. Well, actually, on this side of the House we say that success is a good thing and tall poppy is bad.

SPEAKER: I'll just make the point that bringing members' personal circumstances into the House has not been encouraged in the past, and there are any number of reasons why that would be the case, certainly not the least of which is that we come here to represent constituents and not necessarily attack each other.

• Question No. 3—Finance

3. SUZE REDMAYNE (National—Rangitikei) to the Minister of Finance: What recent reports has she seen on the economy?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS (Minister of Finance): On Tuesday, Stats NZ released the latest monthly trade figures, which cover imports and exports of goods. This data release shows how well New Zealand's exporters are performing. Seasonally adjusted export values were up 0.9 percent in September, following increases of 7 percent in August and 2.2 percent in July. Taking an annual view, in the year to September export values were up 13.5 percent over the previous year. This, of course, reflects the hard work of Kiwis employed across exporting sectors, which support one in four jobs.

Suze Redmayne: What types of exports have been doing well?

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: New Zealanders going to Aussie.

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Dairy, meat, fruit, and wood together make up over half of New Zealand's goods exports, and these figures are something to celebrate even though Willow-Jean Prime seems to disagree. New Zealand has a well deserved reputation for safe, high-quality food and fibre, and in the year to September dairy exports were up 23 percent compared to the same period last year. Meat exports were up 18 percent, fruit up 33 percent, and wood up 8 percent. Stats NZ notes that a stand-out performer is kiwifruit, now a \$4.5 billion a year industry, up from \$2.6 billion just two years ago. That is a powerful example of innovation, productivity, and global demand delivering real value for New Zealand.

Suze Redmayne: Which export markets have seen an increase?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Well, export values have risen across almost all of New Zealand's overseas markets. In the year to September, goods exports to China increased 15 percent, those to Australia increased 10 percent compared to same period a year ago, and despite higher tariffs New Zealand's goods exports to the United States continue to grow. In the year to September, they were up 8 percent compared to the previous year, with an increase in meat exports being the main driver.

Suze Redmayne: What does this mean for New Zealand's trade balance?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: For the past 30 years, New Zealand has typically recorded an annual goods trade deficit—that is, we import more than we export. This deficit reached its highest levels in 2022 and 2023, peaking at a whopping \$17 billion. Since then, it has narrowed considerably. This week's data shows an annual trade deficit of only \$2 billion. That improvement is flowing through to the balance of payments. The current account deficit was a record 9 percent in the year to December 2022. It is now down to 3.7 percent in the year to June 2025, and further improvement is expected in the September quarter, driven by continuing strong growth in exports. It's always a good day to thank the farmers.

Suze Redmayne: What is the Government doing to support the export industry?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: The Government is doing a lot to help that sector, including with a very ambitious trade agenda. Since coming into Government, we have concluded a trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council; concluded, signed, and entered into force a trade agreement with the United Arab Emirates; expedited early entry into force of the agreement with the European Union; launched formal negotiations with India; and we are pursuing new opportunities across South-east Asia. New Zealand makes things the world wants to buy, and the Government will keep backing hard-working Kiwi exporters.

• Question No. 4—Education

4. Dr LAWRENCE XU-NAN (Green) to the Minister of Education: E tautoko ana ia i ngā kōrero me ngā mahi katoa a tōna Kāwanatanga?

[Does she stand by all of the Government's statements and actions?]

Hon ERICA STANFORD (Minister of Education): Yes, within the bounds of my ministerial responsibility.

Hon Members: What? We can't hear.

SPEAKER: Look, there is always a lot of noise going on in the House. I will ask—

Hon Chris Bishop: If you shut up, you might listen.

SPEAKER: Why are you talking while I am? I will ask the Minister to speak more clearly into the microphone but not repeat the answer.

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan: Why is she condemning basic requests for decent pay and working conditions when we lose 50 percent of secondary school teachers in the first five years?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: I'm sorry, I missed the second part of that question. Could you say it again?

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan: Why is she condemning basic requests for decent pay and working conditions when we lose 50 percent of high school teachers in the first five years?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: The simple answer is we're not.

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan: Does she stand by her statement, "We have so many brilliant teachers, and when we back them we get results", and, if so, does she

think backing teachers means pitting them and unions against whānau and students?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, no. What I have been very clear on is the fact that we have been backing our amazing teachers for the last 18 months with the incredible amount of resource that we have been delivering straight to the front line. The three-quarters of a billion dollars of learning support that they so desperately have been asking for. The pathways to principalship, which we have recently announced. The fact that we are paying their teacher registration fees. The professional learning and development opportunities that we have been giving them over the last 18 months—tens of millions of dollars' worth. We have been at the table; we have delivered good pay offers. But it's a shame that one of the unions hasn't even bothered to take it to their members. If they were at the bargaining table, like the Primary Principals' Collective Bargaining Union, there would be a good outcome, but they're not.

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan: Is it backing teachers to have 55 percent—well over the OECD average of 33 percent—reporting that their stress is due to keeping up with curriculum or programme changes, especially when schools are already unable to properly staff existing subjects?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, that's exactly why this week and next week we've been holding the curriculum roadshow, with hundreds of principals and leaders in venues across the country. *[Interruption]*

SPEAKER: Just a minute. You can't, on the one hand, complain that you can't hear what's being said, and then speak over the Minister answering. We'll hear the rest of the question in silence.

Hon ERICA STANFORD: That's why we have been holding curriculum road shows up and down the country this week, with the intent of unpacking the new curriculum, talking about all of the supports—

Hon Ginny Andersen: How's that going?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: —and implementation—

Hon Chris Bishop: Really well.

Hon ERICA STANFORD: —that have been offered to schools and teachers across the country. It has been going really well. We have been completely packed out. In fact, in Auckland we are oversubscribed because teachers and principals and leaders of curriculum can see the value in turning up to these road shows. But what I would say to the unions is the fact that they told principals and teachers to

boycott the very thing that was going to provide them the supports that they needed to implement the curriculum is a real shame.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Rubbish!

SPEAKER: Sorry, are people just perhaps looking for the opportunity to leave early, because they don't have to. The whip is off—

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

SPEAKER: —right up until—I'm speaking!—6 o'clock, so there's no need for any theatrics that might see people asked to leave early.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Point of order, Mr Speaker. We were trying to abide by your request not to speak during the answer of that Minister, but the other side started making noise, so you can expect a little to and fro going on when that occurs, Mr Speaker.

SPEAKER: Perhaps I'm a victim of being able to hear better from this ear than I am from that one, or perhaps the volume from this side is louder than it is from over here. Either way, we'll just conduct ourselves in a much more seemly fashion from this point.

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan: Does she think it is fair to teachers, who work on average 6.5 hours a week more than the OECD teachers' average and just want to do their best for students, to say they're pulling a stunt by going on strike?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: As I've already said, we are backing our teachers by making sure that they have the resources and the supports that they need to implement the new curriculum, and to have more supports in the classroom when it comes to learning support. Teachers have been asking us and previous Governments, for a really long time, to help reduce the workload on them. That's exactly what we've been doing with curriculum reforms, with maths books and textbooks being delivered into classrooms, with three-quarters of a billion dollars' worth of learning support delivered into classrooms. Not everything is delivered through collective bargaining; sometimes you get a Government who listens to teachers and principals on the front line and who delivers for them in other ways, which is exactly what we have done.

• Question No. 5—Transport

5. DAN BIDOIS (National—Northcote) to the Minister of Transport: What announcements has he made about the Bikes in Schools programme?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Minister of Transport): I was thrilled to announce last week, at Wilford School in Petone, that the Government has made a new \$3.5 million funding commitment to ensure the Bikes in Schools programme can go from strength to strength. Bikes in Schools was first funded in 2010. It's a great programme. It provides opportunities for primary and intermediate school kids to learn the basics of riding a bike safely, and it's fantastic to see this programme rolling out around the country once again.

Dan Bidois: What will this new money go towards?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: Funding of \$3.5 million has been confirmed from the New Zealand Transport Agency, from the national road safety promotion programme. It supports the Bike On New Zealand Charitable Trust, and basically, it builds bike tracks in schools, provides bikes and helmets for students, and it enables kids to learn how to ride a bike safely during the school day, and, of course, outside of school hours. I'm informed that often these bike tracks become real community hubs on the weekend.

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall: Will you be teaching them to ride scooters?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: What's that? Teach them how to ride scooters?

SPEAKER: No, no, no, no. Carry on with your answer.

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: This will be a good one.

SPEAKER: That's it. That's the end of that. Is there another supplementary?

Dan Bidois: Yes. *[Interruption]*

SPEAKER: Just wait until the House is a bit quiet. Can I just say, to the Government side, as much as you might think the Minister needs assistance to answer a question, he doesn't.

Dan Bidois: What success has the Bikes in Schools programme had?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: This is pretty awesome. Since 2010, more than 400 schools have got on board with Bikes in Schools. Thousands of kids have learnt how to practice safe biking in schools. I do want to thank Paul McArdle and the team at the Bike On New Zealand Charitable Trust. It's a very successful programme, well loved by communities across the country, and I'm advised that \$3.5 million over the next couple of years will enable between 40 and 60 more schools to roll out bike tracks and bikes.

Dan Bidois: Who will benefit from the Bikes in Schools programme?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: Well, it's tempting to make comments around policy wobbles this week, but what I will say is the most important people who will benefit from the Bikes in Schools programme are our young kids who will learn how to ride a bike safely. There's also a flow-on benefit to tradies in local communities who go out and do this very important work. Some of it's small work, but it's important work none the less.

• **Question No. 6—Social Development and Employment**

6. Hon WILLIE JACKSON (Labour) to the Minister for Social Development and Employment: Does she stand by her 50,000 jobseeker reduction target?

Hon LOUISE UPSTON (Minister for Social Development and Employment): Yes, I absolutely stand by that target. We know it's challenging, but our goal is to grow the economy and help more Kiwis into work as we had seen welfare dependency balloon, when we came into office. Our Government won't lower our targets just because they're challenging. Despite global headwinds, more New Zealanders are moving off benefits and into jobs—over 20,000 last quarter alone. Through stronger case management, training, and practical support, we're backing Kiwis to become work ready, independent, and part of our country's recovery and growth.

Hon Willie Jackson: How many more job seekers are there now compared to when she came into office in November 2023?

Hon LOUISE UPSTON: Well, we have seen an increase in the number of people on the jobseeker benefit, which is what we would expect. But the good news is actually the unemployment rate has not gone up as high as the Treasury forecast when those guys left office. We've seen it at 5.2 percent. It's higher than we would like, but it is the 30-year average. But for every person who loses a job, this side of the House knows it's challenging. That's why we're not sitting on our laurels and we're doing everything we can to help them.

Hon Willie Jackson: Is it the case that she is now closer to adding 50,000 job seekers than she is to removing 50,000 job seekers, and, if so, will she resign if the target is not met?

Hon LOUISE UPSTON: Well, as I've said in this House before, 50,000 is an ambitious target and not one that we will shy away from, because we know the enormous difference that work makes. When we came in, the figures were going the wrong way. It was forecast to peak in December. As I said, the unemployment rate actually isn't as high as was forecast when we came in, despite the challenges we've faced. Every single one of those 50,000 makes an enormous difference—to them, their whānau, the community, and our country. And that's why we're not shying away from the target.

Hon Willie Jackson: How many of the 249 people who have lost their jobs recently in Tokoroa are now on jobseeker?

Hon LOUISE UPSTON: Well, I'm really proud of the work that the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) is doing on the ground in Tokoroa and to be part of Project Phoenix. We are looking at supporting those workers immediately. So some have relocated, others have moved into other opportunities in town. I really feel for the families that haven't lost their jobs just yet but it is coming in the current weeks. I would welcome that member joining Project Phoenix to help the efforts that we're doing on the ground on behalf of our community to support those who are in that very challenging position of either having lost or perhaps losing their jobs in the coming weeks.

Hon Willie Jackson: What does she say to the South Waikato Mayor Gary Petley, who said the Government "doesn't give a toss" about regional New Zealand and, "All that Government [crap] they spin—it's all a smokescreen."?

Hon LOUISE UPSTON: Well, I would just say that I've been working incredibly productively, not just with the mayor and the council but also the local union who values the work that I'm doing on the ground in the community. And as I say, if he's really worried about those workers, I'd invite him to join me.

Hon Willie Jackson: What does she say to Gilbert Sydney, who was made redundant from Kinleith, found a job next door at the plywood plant, only to be made redundant from that job as well, and who said, and I quote, "There's literally no jobs around, not locally ... we literally have to travel like an hour and a half even to find a job."—what does the Minister say to Gilbert Sydney?

Hon LOUISE UPSTON: I have met with many of those affected in Tokoroa and I know how challenging it is. What we are doing is making sure that the welfare system is far more proactive than it's ever been before. We've seen a 60 percent increase in the proactive engagements that MSD is having on the ground, 83,000 people left benefits into jobs in the last year, despite it being challenging, so we are not shying away from the challenge. Eighty-three thousand left a benefit for jobs—83,000. That's a good number.

• Question No. 7—Children

7. SIMON COURT (ACT) to the Minister for Children: What recent data has she seen on findings of harm in State care residences?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR (Minister for Children): I've seen the Oranga Tamariki *Safety of Children in Care* report, which, for the first time ever in New Zealand, showed a decrease in harm within secure residential placements. There has been a 14 percent reduction in findings of harm since 2024. Any harm is

unacceptable, but it must be acknowledged that the significant programme of work across the secure residences is seeing positive results. The introduction of standard operating practices, improved recruitment, training and programming, and a refreshed induction process—among many other things—is resulting in improved safety and wellbeing for those in secure residential care.

Simon Court: What other work has been undertaken to improve the safety and wellbeing in residences?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: In addition to the recruitment, training, and induction for staff, additional investment in Budget 2025 for professionalisation of the workforce will build on this work and promote enhanced safety. This will ensure we have a confident and capable workforce with the skills necessary to work effectively with young people in secure residences. We have also committed to significant infrastructure upgrades at residences to make sure that they are safe and secure for young people, with this work getting under way before the end of the year. We've also invested in leadership training for our team leaders and resident managers, as it is essential that those at the top have the skills and capabilities to lead and to ensure the culture in residences is one of safety, security, and accountability.

Simon Court: What does the data show about children and young people in return-home placements?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: We must acknowledge what is working and where there is still room for improvement. The data shows a disproportionately higher number of children and young people living in return- or remain-home placements experienced harm. These are placements where a child is in the legal custody of the chief executive but has either returned to, or remained in, the care of their immediate family—usually parents. Thirteen percent of children in return- or remain-home placements had a finding of harm. This is one of the reasons why I have always said that the ultimate consideration in decision making about the child must be safety.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Why did you cut funding?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: While, ideally, every child would be in a safe and loving home with their parents, unfortunately, we know this is not always possible.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Where's the support?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: In these situations, the needs and the best interests of children must always come first, and I'll continue to advocate for that.

SPEAKER: The Hon Willow-Jean Prime. Have you got a question?

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Me?

SPEAKER: Yes, you've been calling your question out most of the afternoon.

Simon Court: What else does the data show about findings of harm of children and young people in State care?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: I acknowledge that the latest *Safety of Children in Care* report shows that, in the 12 months to 31 March 2025, there was an increase of 23 children and young people who had a finding of harm compared to the previous year. It is important to note that the majority—over 60 percent—of this harm to children in care was not caused by the person that was responsible for their care. The harm was caused by someone else, be it by another child or a wider family member not responsible for their care, or by an adult not related or known to them. Any harm to a child, whether in care or not in care, is not OK, and of course this is something that I'm really concerned about, and that's the safety of children, and it will remain my top priority as Minister. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge where progress has been made, such as in residences, and to recognise the hard work done by the front-line staff who are dealing with these issues every day.

• Question No. 8—Housing

8. GRANT McCALLUM (National—Northland) to the Associate Minister of Housing: What recent announcements has he made on housing?

Hon TAMA POTAKA (Associate Minister of Housing): Earlier this week, I announced Government support of \$34 million for the Bisset Road development in Kaikohe, within contractual arrangements, led by Ngāpuhi. This development will help deliver a hundred affordable rental homes in Kaikohe. The investment shows iwi and Crown in mahi tahi—or working together—in Kaikohe, making it the largest community-led affordable housing project in the Far North, home of hard-working MP Grant McCallum. It's a great example of iwi-Crown partnership in action—Ngāpuhi leading the project, investing in their own resources, and the Government backing them to deliver at scale.

Grant McCallum: How does this benefit the people of Kaikohe?

Hon TAMA POTAKA: Northland—or Te Tai Tokerau—has some of the highest levels of housing need in the country, due to a range of pressures. This investment directly addresses those challenges with a hundred new affordable rentals. All homes will be retained as affordable rentals for at least 25 years, with rents capped at 80 percent of market levels. Ngāpuhi will also provide wraparound Whānau Ora and hauora support for tenants. In addition, over a hundred fulltime-equivalent roles are expected during construction, supporting local jobs and

apprentices, like Tai, who I met on Monday, up there on Guy Road in Kaikohe, who are creating real homes, local jobs, and opportunities that last alongside, with, and for Māori and all New Zealanders.

Grant McCallum: When will the homes be ready?

Hon TAMA POTAKA: Civil works are expected to start in November 2025, with the full development of a hundred homes to be expected to be completed by mid-2027.

Grant McCallum: How does this fit in with the Government's commitment to partnering with iwi to deliver Māori housing?

Hon TAMA POTAKA: Since December 2023, \$426 million has been approved in three tranches for Māori-led delivery of around a thousand homes. The new homes are a range of papa kāinga housing, owner-occupied housing, and affordable rentals. Projects are focused, for the most part, where housing pressure is the highest, such as Te Tai Tokerau—or Northland—Rotorua; and Te Tairāwhiti, the East Coast, with suitable typologies and addressing shortages for kaumātua, single parents, and young couples. Through partnerships with iwi and Māori housing providers, like Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Rēhia, and Ngāti Rangī—

Hon Willie Jackson: Peeni funded them. You funded no houses.

Hon TAMA POTAKA: —hundreds of homes are under way, including some of one of the members over there who's calling out his father-in-law's brother. Partnering with iwi and Māori organisations will help deliver housing to support stronger whānau and stronger communities, and to ensure that Māori solutions remain central to how we address housing need across Aotearoa New Zealand.

• Question No. 9—Education

9. Hon WILLOW-JEAN PRIME (Labour) to the Minister of Education: Does she stand by her statement, "it's so disappointing that they are playing politics, that they are choosing to go on strike", and will she meet with the predicted over 40,000 striking educators to address their concerns?

Hon ERICA STANFORD (Minister of Education): Yes, I am very disappointed with the unions, following their choice to strike. They haven't prioritised bargaining in good faith, and teachers, parents, and students are paying the price. The member has asked a question in a very odd way—of course I can't meet with 40,000 people. However, I am meeting with members to address their concerns during the Curriculum Roadshow, where we are unpacking the curriculum, explaining the supports, resources, and professional learning and development available, and explaining how they can implement the reforms in their classrooms. These have

been the concerns that the unions have raised, and it's confounding that the unions have advised their members to boycott the very events that their members were calling for. But due to the professionalism of the sector, we've had full events with engaged leaders who see the value of the support that we're providing.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Does she stand by her statement that she has "hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of friends," and is that more than the 40,000 educators who are striking?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, I do stand by that statement because the member is referring to a question that she asked yesterday about my Curriculum Roadshow. There are hundreds and hundreds of educators up and down the country who are coming to the Curriculum Roadshow and there are hundreds more watching online, and I would advise that member that she would have more friends if she answered her text messages.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Does she stand by her statement that Sir Brian Roche "is trying desperately to negotiate in good faith" when he's in charge of a Public Service Commission that ran anti-strike attack ads?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Firstly, in relation to Sir Brian Roche, you can see from the emails that were released under the Official Information Act request in the last 48 hours that there is significant frustration on his part when he is trying to negotiate in good faith and get unions to the table. You can see where, of course, in one regard, he has had extraordinary success with the Primary Principals' Collective Bargaining union, which is a union that was prepared not to go on strike, but to turn up to negotiations, to be open and transparent, to put forward what it wanted to bargain on, and to come to a settlement, and the ads that I have seen are not attack ads. They are simply information ads that the public should have the access to information on.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Why does she choose to undermine unions, rather than actually listen to their concerns?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: I'm not undermining the unions; I'm just pointing out that they're not acting in good faith. But, in fact, there is one union that is acting in good faith and has settled, and that's the Primary Principals' Collective Bargaining union. I would make the point, again, that their membership grows by the day because principals can see that their own unions are not acting in good faith, and they want to settle.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Why did she claim that unions are bullying when it's educators who have voted to strike?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Those comments that I made this morning about unions who were bullying were in relation to conversations that I have had with teachers and principals who have spoken out in the media with a different view, and who have then had enormous pressure put on them by the union. In fact, that was backed up by a text message from a principal that I received after I made—
[Interruption]

SPEAKER: No, stop. Start the answer again, and people will listen quietly.

Hon ERICA STANFORD: I made those comments in relation to a question that I was asked this morning, when the presenter, Ryan Bridge, made the comment that perhaps principals and teachers weren't speaking out because they felt like they were bullied, and I agreed with him. That was from a conversation that I've had with teachers and principals who have come out in the media with a different perspective on things and who have had enormous pressure put on them by the union. I would also say that that was backed up by a text message from a principal that I received after I made that comment, saying that my comments were so true—and the word "so" had about five "o"s on it.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Will she apologise to the education sector for promising pay rises when she was in Opposition and failing to deliver them now that she's the Minister?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, if the unions were prepared to be at the table—like the Primary Principals' Collective Bargaining union—and come to a settlement, then they would find that there are pay rises on the table. Unfortunately, one of the unions hasn't even bothered to put the offer to its members before striking. If the unions were at the table in good faith, they would find that we are there, ready to negotiate.

• Question No. 10—Health

10. RICARDO MENÉNDEZ MARCH (Green) to the **Minister of Health:** Do nurses have safe staffing levels; if so, what evidence does he have to demonstrate that?

Hon SIMEON BROWN (Minister of Health): As I said yesterday, yes. Since coming into office, this Government has added around 2,000 more nurses to the public health system compared to 2023, alongside hundreds of additional doctors. That's backed by a record additional \$16.68 billion of investment in health over three Budgets. I'm advised that patient safety measures, such as in-hospital deaths, surgical site infections, and in-hospital falls have been stable or improved over the last five years. Another indicator is hospital capacity. While bed numbers have increased by 175 over the past three years, the number of nurses employed has grown by more than 3,000 during that same time period, strengthening the level of care available to patients. Health New Zealand is committed to safe care. That's

why we're growing the health workforce and holding the system accountable through clear health targets so patients get the care they need when they need it.

Ricardo Menéndez March: Is it correct that the Care Capacity Demand Management (CCDM) system data, the tool to measure actual patient need presenting in our hospitals, shows that nurses are facing unsafe working conditions?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: Well, as the Chief Clinical Officer at Health New Zealand, Richard Sullivan, says, the CCDM system contains moment-in-time operational data and is not a direct proxy for unsafe or safe staffing. As Health New Zealand has said publicly, using this tool in isolation to claim that wards are understaffed and unsafe is misleading, and actually there is a range of factors that need to be taken into account, including those factors that I referred to in my primary answer: such as in-hospital deaths, surgical site infections, and in-hospital falls, which have been stable or improved over the last five years, and also, as I said, hospital capacity. While bed numbers have increased by 175 over the past three years, the number of nurses employed has grown by more than 3,000 during that same time period.

Ricardo Menéndez March: Who is correct: the Minister of Health, who said that nurses have safe working conditions, or Jade Power, a registered nurse, who said, "Many nurses work past their shifts unpaid because there is no one to hand over to. Breaks are missed, exhaustion is growing, and compassion fatigue is setting in. It's unsustainable."?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: Well, I acknowledge the hard work of our nursing staff and our doctors and all of the healthcare professionals, who work incredibly hard in our healthcare system, but I would also point to the facts, and I think we have to take into account the facts as put to me by the Chief Clinical Officer of Health New Zealand, who looks at a range of factors when it comes to safety in our hospitals, including measures such as in-hospital deaths, surgical site infections, and in-hospital falls, which have been stable or improving in the last five years; hospital capacity, which shows that 175 additional beds have been built, and the number of nurses employed has grown by over 3,000 during that same time period. There is a range of factors we take into account to look at patient safety in our health system, and it's good to see the increased resourcing going to the front line.

Ricardo Menéndez March: Is he saying that the countless nurses who have raised concerns around unsafe working conditions are wrong?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: What I am saying is that there is a range of factors that are taken into account, and the Chief Clinical Officer of Health New Zealand has been explaining it. I'd also point to the comments by the CEO of Health New Zealand, Dale Bramley—

Ricardo Menéndez March: Is he a nurse?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: —Dr Dale Bramley, who says, "One of the biggest clinical safety risks in our hospitals right now, for patients, is waiting times." We inherited long waiting times, and unions which strike continue to extend those waiting times for patients.

• Question No. 11—Mental Health

11. CARL BATES (National—Whanganui) to the Minister for Mental Health: What recent announcements has he made about crisis recovery cafés?

Hon MATT DOOCEY (Minister for Mental Health): Our mental health plan is focused on delivering results, faster access to support, more front-line workers, and a better crisis response. Recently, I opened Whanganui's new crisis recovery cafe, the first of six cafes being rolled out by the Government across the country. The new crisis recovery cafe is being delivered by Balance Aotearoa, with Government backing to bring the idea to life. Whether it's your child, a friend, or a family member reaching out for support, we're committed to ensuring support is there.

Carl Bates: What is a crisis recovery cafe?

Hon MATT DOOCEY: One of my top priorities is to improve access to mental health support so we can ensure all Kiwis have the help they need when and where it's needed. Crisis cafes are a peer delivered service and provide a safe, relaxed non-clinical setting for people who are in distress and need to talk someone face to face. Sitting in the emergency department or in clinical settings at a time of mental distress can be a very challenging place for people. Crisis recovery cafes provide an alternative, welcoming place to go when people need support. To deliver a better crisis response we want to ensure there is someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go.

Carl Bates: What other areas are receiving Government support for crisis recovery cafes?

Hon MATT DOOCEY: Our mental health plan is working, with over 80 percent of people seen within three weeks for specialist services and the front-line mental health workforce growing around 10 percent since coming into office. Earlier this year, I announced funding for the Wellington City Mission's crisis cafe as part of the Government's mental health community innovation fund. The funding boost allowed the mission to scale up to 24 hours. Tomorrow, I'll visit Whakatane's resilience cafe, who, with their funding boost will extend their opening hours, employ more peer support workers, and double their capacity. No matter where you live, this Government is committed to ensuring that timely support is there.

Carl Bates: What feedback has he seen on the Government's roll-out of crisis recovery cafes?

Hon MATT DOOCEY: This Government is not just focused on ensuring the right support is in place to treat mental health issues, but we focus strongly on preventing Kiwis from getting to that point. Tony said "Awesome for Whanganui! Top work by the Government. We have to be open to new ideas to support those with mental illness, and this seems like it has huge potential." Bobby said "It's an amazing experience there for everyone who uses it. Absolutely no bad stigma or to be made to feel bad. I really think the entire concept is somewhat magical." Behind every one of these new services are hundreds of Kiwis now getting the support they need.

• Question No. 12—Economic Growth

12. Hon GINNY ANDERSEN (Labour) to the Minister for Economic Growth: Does she agree with Nicola Willis that a National-led Government "will rebuild the economy to reduce the cost of living and help Kiwis get ahead"?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS (Minister for Economic Growth): Yes. Members of the House will be interested to know that I made that statement in 2023, in a press release titled "Labour in economic 'la la land', planning more taxes". The more things change, the more they stay the same. Of course, at that time, inflation was running at 5.6 percent. It's now been back in band for more than five quarters. Food price inflation was running at 8.8 percent; it is now down to 4.6 percent. And the official cash rate had been rapidly rising, reaching a peak of 5.5 percent; it is now down to 2.5 percent. Of course, also since then, the Government has delivered tax relief to more than 1.9 million households—tax relief opposed by Labour.

Hon Ginny Andersen: How does a pay offer for teachers, firefighters, and nurses that does not keep up with the cost of living help Kiwis to get ahead?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: I reject the assertion in that question.

Hon Ginny Andersen: How can the estimated 100,000 Kiwis who have walked off the job today get ahead when they are overworked and undervalued by her Government?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Well, our Government values greatly the work by nurses, teachers, firefighters, and others on the public payroll, and what we would say to them is that they would be able to get a pay rise much more rapidly if their union went back to the bargaining table instead of playing politics.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Why is her Government handing Crown board directors pay rises of up to 80 percent while teachers and nurses are struggling to cope with the cost of living crisis?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Well, I find this an interesting question, because I understand that the member's party is quite enamoured by Temasek, which, of course, is an interesting model for running Crown assets. Temasek is distinguished by a couple of things, members: one of them is that it often sells assets and purchases others, and another factor is that it pays its directors well because it wants the companies to be run well. Our Government came in to a number of basket-cases in terms of Crown entity management, including Kāinga Ora and ACC, and we are determined to run those services and assets better on behalf of taxpayers.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Are teachers, doctors, prison staff, and firefighters wrong to ask for safe working conditions and pay that keeps up with the cost of living?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Obviously not.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Is she surprised that 200 New Zealanders leave our shores each day—each day—when her Government refuses to pay hard-working front-line workers what they're worth?

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Well, I would just like to share with that member a statistic that I certainly find interesting, and it is this: in the 21 months of data since this Government came into office, annual net departures of New Zealand citizens increased by 5,800. This contrasts with the 21 months prior to that, under the previous Government—

Hon Peeni Henare: Call the fire service.

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: —through which annual—listen up, Peeni Henare, because annual net departures of New Zealand citizens increased by 38,000—*[Interruption]*

SPEAKER: Sorry—sorry—we're going to start again. We're not having that barracking across the House.

Hon NICOLA WILLIS: Let me summarise my answer, which is this: under the last 21 months of the Government of which that member was in Cabinet, annual net departures of New Zealand citizens increased by 38,000. In the 21 months since this Government has been in office, that number was 5,800, so our record stacks up better than yours on that and many, many other things, including the fact we include numbers in our policies.

SPEAKER: That concludes oral questions. Members should be leaving the House quietly while we have the committee change over.

- **HOUSE IN COMMITTEE**

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, the House is in committee on the Parliament Bill and the Land Transport Management (Time of Use Charging) Amendment Bill. We will start with the Parliament Bill.

- **PARLIAMENT BILL**

In Committee

Part 1 Preliminary provisions and Schedule 1

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): We come first to Part 1. Part 1 is the debate on clauses 3 to 8, "Preliminary provisions" and "Schedule 1". The question is that Part 1 stand part. The question is that the Minister's amendment—

Rt Hon Adrian Rurawhe: Madam Speaker? Madam Chair, rather.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Oh, well, I'm going to make an exception this time because there were a few people wandering around and I did not see the member who ably chaired the Parliament Bill Committee, so I'll take a call: the Rt Hon Adrian Rurawhe.

- **Rt Hon ADRIAN RURAWHE (Labour):** Thank you, Madam Chair; I'm out of practice. I just wanted to make a brief call on Part 1 of the bill, basically to say that it's important and correct and right that these four pieces of legislation be brought together into one new piece of legislation. The only other point that I would make—and it will become relevant later on in the debate—is that it does not include the Official Information Act. Why I say that is because several submitters made submissions on the Official Information Act to bring Parliament's information under that as well. Those were deemed, by the committee, to be out of scope of this bill. That's my brief introduction, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity.
 - **GLEN BENNETT (Labour):** Kia ora, Madam Chair. As we begin the committee stage of this bill, I do look at Part 1 and the purpose, clause 3. As it says currently, "The purpose of this Act is to consolidate and modernise the law about operating and administering Parliament." The reason I'd be interested in the Minister making a contribution is just for the public to understand what this is about, because I very much think this bill is about this place and about the people in this place and how it's funded, and the goings-on.
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We don't want to labour the committee stage, but we do want to be seen to actually prosecute and to ask some questions to give confidence to the public so that they understand what this bill is about—and it's not just for us as MPs finding

a way, I guess, to feather our nest or to make it easy for us, but it's to help make the system better.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is an important bill. I thank members of the Opposition, and others, for their constructive engagement on this. We had a special select committee on this, which, I think, as duly appropriate, it was well chaired by former Speaker the Rt Hon Adrian Rurawhe—and thank you for his contribution.
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This is an important piece of legislation and probably one that's a little bit overdue and one that past Governments and past parliaments have looked at. It brings together the Clerk of the House of Representatives Act 1988, the Parliamentary Service Act 2000, the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Services) Act 2013, and the Parliamentary Privilege Act 2014.

There are a couple of things going on there. One is that if you want to understand how Parliament operates and how it's funded and what its powers are and all of the legislation to do with Parliament, there isn't one place to find it; you've got to go and look at those four Acts. This, if it becomes law and the House approves it, will become the Parliament Act 2025 and it will be the one place. Now, people might say, "Well, bringing together legislation, that doesn't really seem like much of a deal.", but, actually, it's important to the rule of law and cogency of the statute book that we don't have random pieces of legislation that do different things but all actually relate to the same topic—or, in this case, relate to the same institutions: the very important home of our democracy.

The second thing is that some of these statutes are quite out of date. The last time we went through a serious round of kind of parliamentary reform was actually in Sir Geoffrey Palmer's day, that great reform period of 1987 through 1990—a bit controversial, in some respects, for some, but, from a parliamentary point of view, quite a lot was done by Sir Geoffrey back then, as Attorney-General and Minister of Justice and Leader of the House, to create, essentially, the modern-day foundations of the Parliament: the select committee system, for example. But the Clerk of the House of Representatives got its own Act back in 1988 during that period. The Parliamentary Services Act 2000 is now 25 years old, as well. So it is about modernising this legislation.

In relation to the Parliamentary Privilege Act, Parliament went through an exercise soon after I became an MP—or it might have been contemporaneously when I became the MP—about responding to the judgment of *Attorney-General v Leigh*, from memory, and there was another case as well in which it became, without boring the committee, really clear that Parliament had to reassert the traditional privileges that exist for all members of this House around freedom of speech and put into statute some common law rights that have, perhaps, at least arguably, contestably at law didn't exist or we needed to make clear that they did exist. So

the Parliamentary Privilege Act was a response to court judgments and now it's going to be a part of the Parliament Act.

There are some important changes that the Parliament Bill, this bill, makes in relation to parliamentary security, which, no doubt, we'll get to. It also, importantly, changes the funding model, and, in particular, it gives Parliament more independence from the executive in relation to the funding of Parliament. In our Westminster system, with our fused executive and legislature, by definition, the Government governs and controls the Budget, but, actually, Parliament is its own separate institution. There's always been a natural tension there—which, actually, to be honest, you can't get rid of entirely—between the operation of the funding of Parliament, the legislature, its own institution, and the executive, which, by definition, is only the executive because it has control of the Parliament; if that wasn't the case, they wouldn't be the executive.

So what this bill does is put in place a more independent process in which the House is in charge of its own budgets, there is some involvement of the executive but it's a step forward from the status quo where I think most people would say it's more biased towards the Government. That hasn't really been a problem, to be honest—I hope both sides of the House would agree on that. It hasn't really been a problem in practice, but there's always the potential. Law is sometimes not about necessarily solving the problems of today; it's about futureproofing to make sure we don't endure problems in the future. So that's the purpose of the Parliament Bill.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): The question is that the Minister's amendments to Part 1 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Part 1 as amended agreed to.

- **Part 2 Parliamentary privilege**

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, we come now to Part 2 which is the debate on clauses 9 to 39, "Parliamentary privilege". The question is that Part 2 stand part.

Rt Hon ADRIAN RURAWHE (Labour): Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister has pointed out, the Parliamentary Privilege Act 2014—some submitters thought that it should stand alone. The committee decided that it could be included in there and that it stood on its own mana, basically, in my words. So I just wanted to make that comment at the committee of the whole House. I think that it is important that all four of those pieces of legislation are brought together into one document, including parliamentary privilege. Thank you.

- **CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger):** The question—

Ingrid Leary: Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): I had started voting. Members are going to have to be quick. There are lots of parts to this bill, and I'm sorry, I had started voting. The question is that the Minister's amendment to Part 2 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): The question is that the Rt Hon Chris Hipkins' amendment to Part 2 set out on Amendment Paper 344 be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Part 2 agreed to.

- **Part 3 Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and parliamentary precincts**

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, we come now to Part 3—

Hon Chris Bishop: Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): I'm just going to outline that this is the debate—I know that the Minister knows, but this is the debate on clauses 40 to 56, "Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and parliamentary precincts", and Schedule 2. The question is that Part 3 stand part.

Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House): If the committee will indulge me, or the Chair will indulge me, I do just want to make a brief comment in relation to Part 2, which we've just covered, which I know we've voted on, but there seems to be a spirit of bonhomie in the Chamber, so I hope the committee won't mind. The committee has just voted on an amendment from the Rt Hon Chris Hipkins that I do just want to briefly touch on. I mistakenly looked at the amendment and thought it was in relation to Part 7, so I thought we might have a bit of time, but it's actually in relation to Part 2.

The committee has just voted to clarify that the House of Representatives cannot imprison for contempt, and that is an important change. Well, it could be seen as important. It is not clear, from a reading of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand* by David McGee and case law and recent Privileges Committee reports, that Parliament could not or the House could not imprison someone for contempt of Parliament. It's worth noting that this power has never been exercised in New

Zealand by the House of Representatives, so the committee has just voted to make it clear that imprisonment is not a punishment for contempt.

Now, what is a contempt? Well, a contempt is a serious breach of the Standing Orders, as judged by the Privileges Committee. It's laid out in *Standing Orders*, and, regrettably, this Parliament, and indeed the Parliament before, has had some incidents where members have behaved badly—I think it's fair to say that—and people have been referred to the Privileges Committee and people have been found guilty of contempt. There are a variety of punishments that can be laid down for that. What has been discussed is whether or not the extremity of the punishment could extend to imprisonment, and we've now decided that that is not the case.

I'm advised that, in section 8 of the Parliamentary Privilege Act 2014, which will now become part of the Parliament Bill, the House has the powers exercisable by the UK House of Commons as at 1 January 1865. Of course, back then—someone will have no doubt gone away and researched this—in 1865 in the UK House of Commons, they did have the power to imprison people by committing them into the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. It is at least arguable that the New Zealand House of Representatives had that power up until, well, two minutes ago, or 2½ minutes ago. I suppose it doesn't take effect yet, until we've received the royal assent—so, I don't know, next week or something.

Now that's been clarified, and I do want to thank the Rt Hon Chris Hipkins for moving that amendment, which the Government has been pleased to support.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Thank you, that's a very important clarification. Is this in response or is this Part 3?

Rt Hon Adrian Rurawhe: No, sorry, I'm on Part 3.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): That's all right. OK. That was very important, thank you.

- **Rt Hon ADRIAN RURAWHE (Labour):** For the record, I thought it was Part 7 as well. I just want to recognise that in Part 3, the Speaker of the House will have the ability to delegate certain functions to the Deputy Speaker, which I think is wholly appropriate, in the same way that a Minister who also has responsibilities under the Public Finance Act, say, might delegate something to an Associate Minister or an under-secretary. So I just wanted to just briefly recognise that in Part 3, that is one of the things that has changed in there. Kia ora.
- **INGRID LEARY (Labour—Taieri):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to draw the House's attention to what I think is a really good change, but I ask for a couple of clarifications: that is, in clause 61, where we've got the "meaning of adult dependant", and we're talking about an adult dependant in relation to "a person ...

means a person who has a disability that means they require ongoing daily care", and this is going to entitle them to—

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Oh, I think clause 61 is in a different part.

INGRID LEARY: Oh, sorry. My apologies, Madam Chair; I've jumped ahead.

- **GLEN BENNETT (Labour):** Kia ora, Madam Chair. Clause 52 is around the "House of Representatives may add ... to parliamentary precincts". Obviously, we have the current precinct where it's at—well, the three buildings, and buildings that are currently being built. I just want to seek clarification that this, obviously, is around—I mean, the initial purchase of the land back in 1867, or whenever it was, can be dubious, in many ways. I'm just wanting to seek clarification from the Minister that whenever we talk about adding land to the parliamentary precinct, this, obviously, will be in a way that fits in with current laws and isn't about acquiring land, but is around doing right by modern laws.
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Also, the ability for members or the Business Committee to look at what the parliamentary precinct is: does that fit into the space in terms of whether Parliament is able to not just purchase more land, but actually add to the precinct? For example, Defence House, behind us, is becoming part of the precinct. I just want to clarify that that obviously all sits quite clearly and making sure that however land is acquired in the future, it is done in a way that honours current laws and honours our commitment to the Treaty.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** Just in relation to a couple of comments made, they're both really important points. Mr Rurawhe talks about the Deputy Speaker; that is a really important point in Part 3 of this bill. The Parliamentary Service Act 2000 makes it clear that the Deputy Speaker can have the functions and powers of the Speaker, but it's unclear in the Clerk of the House of Representatives Act 1988. This goes back to the starting point, which is that the Act was written in 1988 and needs updating. So this makes it crystal clear that the Deputy Speaker can exercise the functions of the Speaker.
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In relation to Glen Bennett's point around clause 52, this is a bit of a carry-over provision, but it makes it clear that the "parliamentary precincts" in clause 53 are Parliament buildings, including the very important executive wing, of course, and Part 1 of Schedule 2 and Part 2 of Schedule 2 have the indicative map of the land. The key point is that there's flexibility for Parliament in the future if it chooses to grow and expand. In fact, there's a process under way around that at the moment, but it just gives some flexibility so that, by resolution, the House can expand the grounds without having to go through a legislative change, because being on the parliamentary grounds has a particular meaning for Parliament, not the least of which is leave. And before any honourable member asks: yes, there would be the ability to extend that to places of ill repute near Parliament, but there is no current

proposal on the table to do that and, I hasten to add, for everyone listening, the Government is not intending to do that.

- **INGRID LEARY (Labour—Taieri):** I believe I'm on the right part now, Madam Chair. I just want to draw the Minister's attention to clause 55. It talks about the Speaker controlling and administering the parliamentary precincts. It talks specifically about the powers that are vested in the Speaker, and then it kind of self-refers, in subclause (2), to subclause (1), but it's pretty unclear about what the precincts mean.
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I'm thinking of a specific example here. For example, is it the Minister's view that the Speaker has authority and powers under this legislation to direct and control members of various workforces, such as security guards, the parliamentary colleagues or staff working with MPs, and the press gallery? I'm thinking about examples where there could be events happening on the forecourt and members of Parliament might want their EAs and others present. Can the Speaker, under the legislation as it's currently worded, make an order to remove the press gallery, for example, or to require staff to go back inside?

The reason I raise this is that, in some of those situations, members of Parliament could feel quite insecure given the volatility at the moment around public protest and polarised views, and parliamentary members may not want to venture on to the forecourt if they don't feel they have adequate support from staff. Equally there is a duty for the fourth estate, the media, in this place to make sure that everything here happens transparently, and it is of great public interest when there are large crowds on the forecourt. I'm not challenging anything that has happened over recent times; it may well be that that is the Minister's understanding, but I question whether the legislation as it's currently worded actually does make that explicit, and whether, if that is his view and if it was the will of the committee, it should be added. If it was not the will of the committee or if there were not public submissions on these very important points, my view would be that the legislation should be read at face value, and that the clarification should be made via an amendment or we should have it on the record what actually the committee came to conclude here.

These are not entirely hypothetical situations, which is why I am raising them very respectfully, but I do think that the public interest, the media interest, and also the personal views of MPs when it comes to staff and resourcing and support need to be considered when we're looking at the boundaries that relate to clause 55, which really does confer an awful lot of power on the Speaker, or vested in the Speaker, as is right to have that power, but I think the boundaries need to be extremely clear so that, in those situations, everybody is comfortable and clear about what the rules are, and when they could decline or not follow a direction and when they are required to under this legislation.

- **Rt Hon ADRIAN RURAWHE (Labour):** Hopefully I can be helpful on that particular question. It's actually a question I asked at select committee. What we need to remember is that under the new set of rules and under this new legislation, which we'll talk about in Part 7, there's a clear monitoring role and reporting role and the direct reporting is with the CEO of Parliamentary Service. The Speaker of the House has overall authority but doesn't actually carry it out himself or herself.
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And so it's really important that we recognise that the parliamentary security will be operating in a very professional way under clear rules, and, in fact, the regime for reporting such incidents, and carrying that out, is at arm's length from the Speaker of the House.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm grateful to my friend Adrian Rurawhe for outlining that. Of course, with his experience as a former Speaker, I think he would have been able to go through these issues at select committee, which I'm sure they did.
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The member does raise a good point. The Speaker has broad discretion in administration and control of the precincts. That's what clause 55 means. The easiest way to think about it is that the Speaker is, essentially, the Minister of Parliament. They're in charge of Parliament. They're like Parliament's Minister. It's not a perfect analogy. It's an inapt analogy, but it's close enough to the truth.

But, of course, there are a couple of checks on the Speaker just having unlimited power. One is that he's subject to the control of the House. I've been around long enough to see no-confidence motions, and sometimes they get moved and most times they don't, but they sit on the Order Paper. Members who have been around for a while will remember some of the back and forwards about those. So, ultimately, the House is in control of who the Speaker is, so that is actually a really important check.

Then the other thing I would say is that the Speaker has to act reasonably. Why do I say that? Well, there's quite a long line of case law around this, most notably the *Beggs* case which has to do with protest and assembly on the forecourt. And, of course, the Speaker, as indeed the whole of Parliament, is subject to the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 by dint of section 3. Is it section 3? Yes, it is. My friend James Meager is nodding at me.

Section 3 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act makes the legislature, the executive, and the judicial branches of Government subject to the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, which means that powers in relation to Parliament have to be exercised in accordance with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, and so that is an important check as well.

So I understand where the member's coming from, but of course, clause 7 is the substantive change that we're making around the parliamentary security officers, which is where I think the rubber hits the road on this stuff.

- **INGRID LEARY (Labour—Taieri):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in view of the incredibly helpful comments from my colleague the Rt Hon Adrian Rurawhe, and also what the Minister has indicated—and I understand and appreciate the validity and importance of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act. What I heard from my colleague was something around due process and the line of communication and direction being really crystal clear and not muddled.
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I appreciate these things happen very quickly when they do. I wonder if the Minister can indicate whether he is open-minded about looking at the devil in the detail about how that should happen, so that the reasonableness test—which, we know, is incredibly broad—is not the litmus test, but there is something a little bit more substantial, so that those delegations happen appropriately and everybody is clear about what the rules are and what they do and don't need to do.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** Well, I'm happy to have a look at it. The ship has sailed, somewhat, to be honest, because the committee has reported the bill back unanimously, and, as I understand it, there's no Amendment Paper from the member in relation to that—but I'm happy to look at it in the future. Until we've got evidence that there's actually a problem, having gone through quite a long process—the gestation of this bill has been many years. It actually spans back to the previous Government. So, happy to have a look at it in the future, but I'm not convinced at the moment that there's actually a problem worth solving.
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CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): The question is that the Minister's amendment to Part 3 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Part 3 as amended agreed to.

- **Part 4 Salaries, allowances, expenses, and services for members and others**
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CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, we come now to Part 4. Part 4 is the debate on clauses 57 to 100, "Salaries, allowances, expenses, and services for Members and others", and Schedule 3. The question is that Part 4 stand part.

- **INGRID LEARY (Labour—Taieri):** I'm just excited to get back to the point that I was asking about previously—it's not a major one. It is a really good change to the legislation, where it shows some leadership from this place around adult dependency, and a recognition that some members of Parliament have adult dependants and that there should be different provisions made that can ensure

that families spend time together. I think this is a good signal, actually, to the wider community about having some flexibility, because, previously, only the dependent children—I think 18 years or under; it might even be under 18 years, I can't remember—could qualify for travel. And that is not to be a perk of the job; it's really about making sure that children and their parents that work in this place actually remember who each other are, given the long hours. But that did not apply and did not take into account any element of dependency.

So we've got this changed provision in clause 61, and there is a test in it and it talks about a disability that means they require ongoing daily care, and then there are a number of things that need to be fulfilled under paragraph (a)—with the member presumably being the one who provides the care—and paragraph (b) about financial dependence and the fact they're not living with another person in a de facto relationship. So that all seems really good.

When I turn over to clause 63 and I see the meaning of a "dependent child", it's pretty similar. But we have in there, in paragraph (c), "to whom A provides ongoing care;", and then a number of the other similar tests. And I guess it could be argued, because we've got "enrolled at a registered school within the meaning of section 10(1) of the Education and Training Act", really it's about the meaning of ongoing care. It could be that there are some people who are in that education who may be living with others but are still relying financially on a parent, they're not in a de facto relationship, they're pretty dependent, they can't get a part-time job, but they may not necessarily be living in the same home—which is not in there; it's just got provisions about family, ongoing care, and not being in a de facto relationship.

Earlier on, it doesn't really define what ongoing care is; it defines the meaning of a "dependent child". But I wonder if the Leader of the House could clarify for the record how he sees the boundaries of this so that we—I don't think it's intended to capture people who are very dependent but not living in the same household as the MP. I think it would be good to know that, because otherwise there could be—with some of the clever legal, and other, minds in this place—some pushing up against the boundaries of the rules, and we would need to be really clear about who can qualify.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** I appreciate the point that the member is making. Ultimately, the judge of this is the Speaker, and so I appreciate the member's invitation, but I am not going to seek to define that here, because I would get it wrong and I would not want to mislead people. There will be a range of factual circumstances around this. As, I think, every member knows, people's living circumstances can be simple and sometimes they are complex, and I'm not judging anyone—I would never seek to do that.
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The intent of this, as the member rightly outlines, is to be slightly more progressive around the support that can be provided and, again, to just update it and make

sure that we're keeping pace with the variety of circumstances that some people find themselves in. So there is no test, and I suspect that that's probably deliberate. Ultimately, the judge of this will be the Speaker, and there is a whole range of things in the Speaker's determinations and the rules around funding allowances and things like that, where, ultimately, the Speaker has the final say. The same checks apply—as I said probably about 10 minutes or so ago—in relation to judgments around that.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): The question is that the Minister's amendments to Part 4 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Part 4 as amended agreed to.

- **Part 5 Clerk and Office of the Clerk**

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, we come to Part 5, the debate on clauses 101 to 120, "Clerk and Office of the Clerk", and Schedules 4 and 5. The question is that Part 5 stand part.

The question is that the Minister's amendments to Part 5 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Part 5 as amended agreed to.

- **Part 6 Parliamentary Service and other parliamentary bodies**

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, we now come to Part 6. Part 6 is the debate on clauses 121 to 161, "Parliamentary Service and other parliamentary bodies", and Schedule 6. The question is that Part 6 stand part.

The question is that the Minister's amendments to Part 6 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Part 6 as amended agreed to.

- **Part 7 Parliamentary security**

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, we come now to Part 7. This is the debate on clauses 162 to 190B, "Parliamentary security". The question is that Part 7 stand part.

GLEN BENNETT (Labour): Kia ora, Madam Chair. The Minister did allude to this a bit earlier, and again, we don't want to labour this, but we want to spend a moment just reflecting. This is around parliamentary security. And again I, without expecting the Minister to do everything I say, but you know, I'd like him to explain a little bit what this is about, because I think what we currently have and what this part will do is quite a major change in terms of parliamentary security.

My first question, just to open up, is around Subpart 1, so clause 162 to Subpart 1, just around the actual definition of a security guard. I just want to seek clarification that they are specifically employed by Parliamentary Services, because I know in the past, for example, an electorate office out in the provinces or out around the country, there have been moments when there has been red flag issues and obviously there's been security things put in place, but actually having a security guard, for example, Armourguard or others for, you know, a set number of days or for a week because of something that's been heightened in that community.

So my question to the Minister is just to clarify that when we're actually talking specifically—again, Subpart 1—about the actual definition of a security officer, that they are specifically employed by Parliamentary Services. Or does that go beyond it to contracted Armourguard-type of services?

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** I'm advised it does not include contractors; it applies to people employed by Parliament. The member Glen Bennett makes a good point that this is a change, and it is largely to clarify the law and make sure we have a modern approach to parliamentary security. It's modelled on the Courts Security Act, so the parliamentary security officers—who do a very good job may I say—will be similar to those of court security officers, who if you think about it are the other branch of Government, the judicial branch—they play a similar role in relation to that. The bill gives parliamentary security officers statutory powers of consent, search, denial of entry, temporary seizure of specified items, and temporary detention. The powers apply in the parliamentary precincts, parliamentary meetings outside the precincts—so, for example, sometimes select committees travel and do submissions in hotels or community halls; actually I think, probably, we should do a little bit more of that to be honest—and electorate and community offices. Of course, if MPs do travel for those, it tends to be—you know, by definition it's not Parliament, it's not the parliamentary precincts, and so because it's the sort of everyday, run-of-the-mill place, it makes sure that if there is security applied there, then those powers apply.
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It also gives security officers immunity for the appropriate exercise of their functions and powers. It's quite interesting: security officers here currently lack

those statutory powers and immunities. They rely on the common law and the rights of an occupier under the Trespass Act 1980. I think we would all agree that parliamentary security here does an excellent job, and it is really important that they have the appropriate powers in order to make sure that people who work in this building—it's not about MPs to be honest; far more people who are not MPs work here than are actual MPs, so it's more about the staff.

We also need to make sure that Parliament is as accessible as possible. You know, I for one think it is a fantastic thing that it is so easy to visit our Parliament and it's free, and you should never be charged to come to Parliament. And as long as you're not carrying things that you shouldn't be carrying, you can walk in, sit up and watch question time or you can watch the debates, and you can wander around and you can visit your MP. I mean, I've been lucky enough to travel to other parliaments around the world—sometimes even when I'm being a tourist in my own time, I've travelled to other parliaments; it's a slightly sad thing to admit—other parliaments are not like that. They're not. The House of Commons in the UK, it's like getting into Fort Knox, which is sad but it's the reality. And there are other legislatures and congresses and houses of representatives which are all but impossible to visit as a tourist or even probably an everyday citizen. That is a sad reality, and I hope we never get to that point in New Zealand. But part of making sure we never get to that point is making sure there's appropriate security, so that's what this section is about.

- **Dr LAWRENCE XU-NAN (Green):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have another question for the Leader of the House regarding this section. I'm looking at the bold part of clause 172A to about 175, and I think that's to do with a definition of a "detected item". Correct me if I'm wrong; it could be something that I missed here. Would the Leader of the House be able to just clarify what a detected item is, or is a detected item based on the four possible processes and how the detected item needs to be surrendered is very much on the item itself? That's kind of the first clarification.
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The second clarification around a detected item is: does a detected item, in order for it to be handed over to the officer on reasonable grounds mean that the item itself, for example, may need to be about to commit or have committed or has the potential to commit or if an offence is considered dangerous? So, yeah, there isn't a specific definition I can see on what a detected item is and the different range it could be treated.

- **Hon GINNY ANDERSEN (Labour):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Look, I'm going to ask another—*[Microphone feedback]* Oh, goodness me. I'd like to ask a question in relation to security, again, in Part 7 of this bill. My question is really thinking about the amazing job that our parliamentary security officers do. They have a tough job in what is a really changed environment, particularly in the last three or four years, in terms of some of the risks that are presenting not just to MPs but to other

people in the general public who want to come into Parliament. They have an amazing ability to detect and act, and we know that the existing provisions under common law, potentially, compromise their ability to deal with serious incidents, risks that would disrupt Parliament, that disrupt the running of Government. Though parliamentary agencies and members continue to advocate for Parliament's accessibility—and there is clear feedback, we know, from public engagement that that should continue—we know that that physical accessibility needs to be balanced with security and safety concerns.

We know, as the Minister has pointed out, that the New Zealand Parliament provides more physical access to the public than many, many overseas parliaments, and we do not want to lose that. But its security arrangements are, really, way out of step with our international counterparts. We know, from the review of parliamentary security, that staff regularly have to manage irate, threatening, and problematic individuals—or, even, groups—and they currently lack the legislative power to respond effectively, safely, and efficiently. They largely depend upon the police to be able to be here, and we see that police do come in here at those times. The review recommended that our parliamentary security officers be provided with legislative powers of detention as soon as practicable.

My question, really, to the Minister is in relation to what training and support will be provided to our parliamentary security officers? If we are providing these additional powers, which I understand is the ability to detain people, they would have the ability to lay their hands on someone, to handcuff them, and to hold them until police arrived. That puts a number of health and safety risks upon the parliamentary security officer. We know, from police experience, that just simply the act of arresting somebody can result in physical injuries for both the arresting officer and the person being arrested. Those things are never as straightforward as you might think they are.

There are a number of injuries, whether it be a dislocated shoulder, an injured finger, other scratching; there are a number of things that could go on if we are expecting our parliamentary security officers to step in and physically put their hands on someone. I think that New Zealanders would like to know that, if we are providing this additional power—which we're not arguing with; we think that there needs to be an increase of security here—that those front-line workers who are putting themselves on the line, what training will they be provided to deal with situations that could be volatile and dangerous?

Secondly, what support—additional to that training—will be provided? Because we know that if someone has been assaulted or abused, that that weighs upon a worker in the days and weeks after the incident has occurred. We know very well most of our parliamentary security staff here as our colleagues and friends, and we would like to be reassured that there is a plan in place to make sure that they are safe at work and that sufficient consideration has gone into how this will play

out for their work safety on a day-to-day basis. I'll be interested to know the Minister's response to those questions.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** I need to clarify my answer from a few minutes ago in relation to the contractor point. The answer is that clause 136(1)(b) makes it clear that there can be contractors appointed if the chief executive considers it necessary and desirable, but they have to be qualified and trained to the equivalent standards. So, sorry about that.
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Members raised a couple of other really good points. I thank them for that. In relation to Mr Xu-Nan's point around detected items, any item found by a parliamentary security officer during a search, the security officer can ask to examine it and determine such matters such as whether it may have been used for an offence, for example, or is dangerous. It's slightly convoluted to get there, but, in a way that he's become known for, he's managed to find a tricky section of the tricky clause, and the references for the members notification are clauses 172A(2) and 173(1)(b) and 173(1)(c). So that I think deals with that.

Miss Andersen makes, I think, a really good point around quite broad powers given to security officers. The section is modelled on the Courts Security Act. So, broadly, with some modifications for the parliamentary environment, the powers of security officers will be the same as those of court security officers. I can't exactly remember when the Courts Security Act was passed, but no doubt the courts went through a similar exercise to what Parliament's gone through, which is realising that there needed to be a bit more statutory tramlines and, you know, rules around security at courts. So this brings Parliament into line with that, which I think is wholly appropriate. I'm advised that there is already training and there will continue to be training for security officers who are here at Parliament, who, as the member says, do a great job.

I would also draw, just more broadly, while we're talking about this part, on some of the quite careful drafting that's been gone through in relation to these powers. So it's power to use reasonable force, but then there are a variety of checks and balances in the section as well. So, for example, clause 190B, the "Chief executive must report annually on the exercise of specified powers"—parliamentary security officers must report the exercise of certain powers; powers are not generally applicable if the police is involved. So, yes, there are powers around detention and reasonable searches and things like that—they're all there for good reasons—but there are also checks and balances in place as well. I think that's wholly appropriate.

- **INGRID LEARY (Labour—Taieri):** Thank you, Madam Chair. This question is really for listeners at home who might be wondering how this new legislation is going to impact their ability to protest and what the lines are there. I refer to the Minister's previous comments about the areas adjacent to Parliament—in fact, he mentioned

a couple of watering holes. I'm wondering, what is a test for adjacency—that is going to have practical implications when it comes to electorate offices? There are some things around pavements and footpaths and so on, but is it feasible that if there was a protest or something where the centre of action that contained threat was at Parliament and it spilled over and, you know, went to some of those watering holes, would a parliamentary security officer potentially have, on reasonable grounds, the ability to intervene if it was the same kaupapa, if you like?

The other one is the question about reasonable grounds, which is a well-recognised legal test. But I would ask the Minister to consider how that interplays with the powers that are invested in the Speaker that we discussed previously, because I had asked if there could be some kind of clarification around process, and I think the Minister thought I meant through the legislative drafting, but, actually, it was more of a procedural thing. My question is, without a clear process of the Speaker using his or her powers through the chief executive or others—the decisions that a security guard believes that they are making on reasonable grounds, which has a legal objectivity element to it—what is the interplay if the Speaker has given a direction that has not gone through a process that involves the chief executive or if there isn't, kind of, a clear process?

I'm thinking here about both the ability of the members of the public to protest in a strong way, but also security officers having clarity about what is reasonable grounds, because the Minister's mentioned the safeguards in a retrospective element, which is annual reporting, and so on. These are decisions that have to be made in very quick times—split seconds—by individuals weighing all these things up.

Again, they're not conceptual or imaginary because the very vexed questions that led to this legislation, in my view, were probably what we saw on the steps of Parliament and the lines that were crossed. There isn't a single view in Aotearoa New Zealand about how those lines were crossed. Many people had many different views about what was and wasn't appropriate. I think most people would agree that burning down the children's playground was not appropriate.

It is so important to have clarity, and I'd just like to get an understanding from the Minister about that reasonableness test. Should it be considered alone, or how does it interplay with the Speaker's powers? Would, for example, a security officer be able to rely on action taken by the Speaker? Presumably, if it was pursuant to a recognised process, that would be fine, but where the Speaker has just said something and then that influences a security guard who may or may not have reasonable grounds, will that Speaker's direction form part of the reasonableness objective test legally? It is quite a technical question, but it has real-life implications for when people protest and for the very difficult job that our security officers have to have in making judgments in the moment.

- **Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Leader of the House):** The member makes good points, but if I could summarise what is reasonable, the answer is: it depends. That's the beauty of the word "reasonable", and it's why it appears multiple times in the statute books and throughout the common law, because what is reasonable in the circumstances is fact specific, and it's impossible, by definition almost, to give a definition. If that makes—yeah, for me it works.
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Historically, the common law has talked about "the man on the Clapham omnibus", it's probably inapplicable to New Zealand—the Karori trolleybus or electric bus these days—what that person thinks is reasonable is the test, and it depends. The short answer is it depends. It's impossible to judge in advance. Yes, it is true that people have to make decisions. That's life. What's important is that there are guard rails and tram lines in place to guide that decision-making process and then, also, that there are checks and balances afterwards.

In relation to the other point the member makes, parliamentary service officers can exercise powers only in the parliamentary precinct, a place where select committees are meeting, electorate offices where the chief executive has authorised it. Beyond that place, police have jurisdiction and the necessary power. To put this into real terms, when you walk into the gates down the bottom and you walk into Parliament, you're subject to Parliament's jurisdiction. When you walk outside and go down Lambton Quay, which is a public footpath or public road, the ordinary laws of the land apply—well, they apply here as well, but you're not part of the parliamentary precinct at that point.

Ingrid Leary: Madam Chair!

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): I was just wondering if the Rt Hon Adrian Rurawhe—you were both standing.

- **Rt Hon ADRIAN RURAWHE (Labour):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to add, on this section, that the committee considered a number of things. There was, as the bill was originally drafted, a procedure in there that required that when an object was removed from someone, they had to be detained. The committee decided that we wanted to give the security officers as many options as possible. For example, if that object was brought to Parliament unknowingly and not without intention of using it as a as a weapon, the danger was then considered to be over and detaining the person wasn't necessary, particularly if they decided they were leaving. So rather than bring police into it, the committee felt that that could be the end of that situation.
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It's relevant to the question that my colleague Lawrence Xu-Nan asked, as well. We considered a lot of things and decided that the common law that the security officers currently operate under just wasn't enough for 2025, and that it was important that we had a set of processes, that we had a set of rules that they could

follow—and, as the Minister pointed out, in a reasonable way, whatever that looks like. I think it's important that this House recognise the gravity of some of the situations that our security people become involved with. I think we owe it to the safe operation of our security and of this Parliament that we give them all the tools that they actually need.

- **DAVID MacLEOD (National—New Plymouth):** I move, *That debate on this question now close.*
 - A party vote was called for on the question, *That debate on this question now close.*
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Ayes 68

New Zealand National 49; ACT New Zealand 11; New Zealand First 8.

Noes 49

New Zealand Labour 34; Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand 15.

Motion agreed to.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): The question is that the Minister's amendments to Part 7 set out on Amendment Paper 362 be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Part 7 as amended agreed to.

CHAIRPERSON (Barbara Kuriger): Members, the time has come for me to report progress. Just for the House's record, I'm going to do something a little unusual here. I'm going to ask one of the members to report back to progress to me because our other Speaker's still in select committee.

House resumed.

• REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON (Simon Court): Madam Speaker, the committee has considered the Parliament Bill and reports that it has made progress on the bill. The committee also considered the Land Transport Management (Time of Use Charging) Amendment Bill and reports it has made progress—

DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I think that one's supposed to say "no progress".

TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON (Simon Court): —has made no progress on the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: "I move"—that's the last bit at the bottom.

TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON (Simon Court): I was going to say that it has made progress, like all of this progress we've just witnessed.

Hon Chris Bishop: Yeah, it has made progress.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, we've made progress on the Parliament Bill. We haven't made progress on the transport bill.

TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON (Simon Court): Madam Speaker, on that basis: I move, *That the report be adopted*.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

- **SPECIAL DEBATES**

Energy—Issues

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, as per the agreement of the Business Committee, we now come to a debate on energy, and this has been arranged under Standing Order 80. Would some honourable member care to move that the House take note of issues relating to energy.

- **Hon SIMON WATTS (Minister for Energy):** I so move. Well, energy powers every part of our economy, from households to high value industries, and will increasingly determine our ability to compete in the global economy, but there is no secret that our energy system has been under pressure for some time.
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New Zealand is on the cusp of a renewable electricity boom thanks to this Government. Because of our work to knock down the barriers to growth and investment, more electricity generation has been commissioned in the past 18 months than in the entirety of the last 15 years. In the future, 95 percent of electricity will come from cheap, clean renewables, but there is one major barrier that we must overcome. Our energy system needs reliable back-up options to generate electricity during our driest years when we cannot rely on hydro lakes or wind to generate sufficient electricity.

At the same time, our electricity market is not functioning as efficiently as it should be. New Zealanders need to have greater confidence that the electricity market has strong regulators and that there is competition sufficient to deliver the affordable prices we all need.

This Government will not kick the can down the road on these issues. This Government is taking action to ensure that power prices come down. We have a clear plan and strong, concrete actions already under way to address energy supply risks and to unleash renewables in order to bring down prices, to give households and businesses more control over their power bills, and importantly, to keep our economy growing.

To manage New Zealand's dry-year problem and bring down power prices, we need reliable sources that can be accessed quickly and on demand. That is why this Government has commenced procurement for an importation terminal for liquefied natural gas (LNG). LNG would bolster—I'm sorry. LNG would bolster our domestic—well, it would bolster and bolster. It will do both.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: That's a critical definition.

Hon SIMON WATTS: Anyway, let's keep going. It will bolster our domestic natural gas market by supplying, of course, that fuel for dry years and supporting our electricity system during times of seasonal peak demand, helping to, of course, unleash more renewables as a result.

Alongside this, officials are working very hard at options for other dry-year investments. A decision on the best way forward will be made by the end of this year. The Government has also written to Genesis, Mercury, and Meridian to ensure that they know that the Crown is prepared to support capital funding requests for strategic and commercially rational investments that support energy security. This will ensure a perceived lack of access to Crown capital does not stand in the way of New Zealand's energy security.

We're also leveraging the Government's energy use, like hospitals, to help unlock new investment in different types of energy generation. Instead of using our demand to pay for generation that we already have, we're going to use it to stimulate new generation solutions to be built and increase New Zealand's total energy supply as a result.

All this work is underpinned by the progress we have made to supercharge renewable energy through our policy, Electrify New Zealand. The Electrify New Zealand programme includes a wide range of actions to support faster and cheaper consenting of energy infrastructure. It will mean more new wind, more solar, more battery, more energy storage systems, and other generation powering our homes and businesses every year.

The Huntly agreement is also an important step in securing short-term security of supply, but more needs to be done to invest in energy security and build better markets for the long term. To stop these problems from re-emerging, we need to work with industry to develop a regulatory framework to ensure power companies

deliver the back-up supply that Kiwis need and deserve. We know that the electricity market must be backed by a powerful regulator. The Electricity Authority should be stronger, more effective, and have harder enforcement tools to ensure New Zealand's electricity system is reliable and delivers better outcomes for New Zealanders.

We are also carrying out a targeted package of reforms to ensure the Electricity Authority can improve market rules, stand up to pressure, and deliver change that will support security of supply, investment, and, importantly, lower prices.

At the same time, the Electricity Authority is taking action too. New rules will ensure hedge contracts are traded fairly. They will require gentailers to treat independent generators and small retailers the same as their own retail businesses. This will help enable new developers and generators to enter the market, help industrials access firm supply contracts, and ensure independent retailers can compete more fairly on an even playing field.

As distribution charges make up a quarter of Kiwis' power bills, it's important that electricity distribution businesses work as efficiently as possible to avoid passing on unnecessary costs to consumers. We'll be working with the industry to deliver greater efficiencies on how electricity distribution businesses (EDBs) operate. We're also making it easier for EDBs to invest in new generation projects.

In addition to the energy package, we're also ensuring the security of our gas and fuel supplies and diversifying New Zealand's fuel mix. Businesses are struggling to get gas contracts and are facing significant price increases compared to the historically low prices we've enjoyed in New Zealand. As a Government, we have prioritised removing barriers to viable alternatives such as biogas and biomass for firms that can and will switch away from gas, and business can also access the 2025 Investment Boost policy, a great tax policy by this Government to support fuel switching. Diversifying New Zealand's energy mix with new fuels and energy sources is an important aspect for our long-term energy security.

Yesterday, I released New Zealand's first Wood Energy Strategy and Action Plan, setting out a clear vision and objectives for the future of the wood energy sector in New Zealand and outlining current and planned work to support the strategy, including co-funding opportunities. In addition, yesterday we also released a Government statement on biogas, reaffirming the Government's commitment to the biogas market and setting out key actions that will enable its growth.

In line with that, there is a significant package of work under way across the regulatory system to make installing solar easier and cheaper and our energy use smarter. This includes updating electricity safety standards to make it easier and cheaper to install rooftop solar systems, increasing the voltage range on electricity networks to accommodate higher levels of solar electricity, and electric vehicle (EV)

charging across the country. We are also introducing legislative changes to enable standards for smart energy devices, including smart EV chargers.

As you can hear, there is a significant amount of work already under way and in place and that has been delivered by this Government. We know how important energy is. We know the important role that it plays in driving economic growth and it is a fundamental input into our economy. As a country, we should and must desire to have abundant and affordable energy, and that is the opportunity in front of us and that is what we must harness and get on and build the generation that will deliver that outcome.

To conclude, I want to reassure Kiwis that this Government is undertaking comprehensive action to ensure that our energy system continues to meet New Zealand's needs into the future. We acknowledge the challenges and the difficulty around high energy prices. We have identified the problems causing that and we are now implementing the suite of actions that will resolve those problems. This is a Government of action and we are delivering.

- **Hon Dr DEBORAH RUSSELL (Labour):** The House has chosen to set aside an hour of its time to debate energy issues, something that says it's a serious issue for this country, something we really need to work on, hopefully, in many ways, in a bipartisan way, because there is much that we can agree on in the energy space.
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What I want to do, however, is to take this debate first back to defining what some of the issues are in the energy space. When I say to think about it, I thought, well, here are the three broad areas of concern around energy in New Zealand. The first is around supply—sufficiency and certainty of supply—the second is around pricing, and the third is around climate. So let me just talk through each of those issues and why they are a particular concern for us. I'll start with supply and certainty of supply.

Of course, what has been affecting the country today does point to that in some regards. So we know that right at the moment around about 90,000 households are without power. I don't know how many businesses are without power, but, given that many households are out, so many businesses will be too. I heard there's some quite big outages in Southland. There must be some farmers there who are a bit worried about milking and how that's going to happen.

Of course, the outages today have been caused by the massive storm through the country. I'm sure that the thoughts of everyone in this House are with the people who are affected directly by the storm and with the workers who are out there trying to get the power back on—I know they'll be working hard out there. But that certainty of supply can be affected not just by storms but literally by whether there is sufficient supply, whether we can rely on the fact that walking into our lounge, our kitchen, our business and turning the switch on means that the lights go on.

It's one thing for the lights to be taken out by a storm, but another if our supply isn't certain. That's something we need to do in this country.

We need to make sure our electricity supply, our energy supply, is certain. In particular, we need to think about what's called firming, making sure that our system is robust. So that's a really important thing. But businesses need to know that their supply is secure. Households need to know that their supply is secure. Hospitals need to know that their supply is secure. So supply is very important to us.

Going alongside the supply of power—just being sure that it actually will arrive when we turn on the switch—is actually the price of power. Power needs to be affordable. Energy needs to be affordable. Now, we've seen just in this last week new inflation figures have come out, and when we do the calculations, we're told that inflation in the year to 30 September has been 3 percent. If you go to the actual data issued by Stats and look at the actual index and do the calculation, the actual inflation wasn't 3 percent; it was actually 3.046875, but, of course, the rounding God smiled upon that.

But if the index had been one point higher—if the index had been 1320 instead of 1319, so, a very small difference—the inflation rate would have been 3.125 percent, outside the Reserve Bank's band. One of the things we know that is driving that inflation rate has been the price of power. In particular, in the Stats New Zealand release, the prices and deflation spokesperson said that, in actual fact, the 11.3 percent annual increase in electricity prices over the last year is the largest since the March 1989 quarter. It's a little bit hard to comprehend what's going on. So this is the graph which came out in the Stats New Zealand release. This is just this very last year, and in just this last steep incline—oh, I can deliver it to you shortly, if you like, Minister. That very, very steep incline and increase in power prices in that last year shows the increase. It was steep; it was hard. We have seen businesses closing because of that increase in power prices. We have seen jobs lost because of the increase in power prices. We have seen real hardship in households because of the increase in power prices. So not only do we need abundant power and readily available power, we need it available at a price that our businesses and our households can afford. So that is the second aspect that we need to think about when we're talking about energy.

The third is climate—the third is climate. We simply must move to renewable power—end of story. There is no choice about it. We must move to increased use of renewables such as wind and solar. We must move to increased use of geothermal power. We must ensure that we have the appropriate batteries, the reserve supply of power; and, frankly, the South Island hydro lakes that we use right at the moment for our everyday power, they are nothing but enormous batteries. Perhaps we need to start thinking of them as that and then having that

reliable source of power from the South Island hydro lakes as a battery and thinking of other renewables as the regular everyday source of power.

There's another reason for going to renewables. It means that New Zealand can be independent in its power. If we are importing coal and gas from overseas, we are not independent. This is where I really disagree with part of what the Government is proposing to do in its energy strategy. If we look at the Government's energy strategy, one of the things that they have said they would do—if I can find the "at a glance"—is to set up a permanent fuel depot. Got it, got it, got it—they're going to launch a formal procurement process for a liquefied natural gas import facility, importing gas, permanently.

We actually need to transition away from gas. I mean, there's a whole rhetoric that says that it's cleaner than other forms of power, but, to be clear, it is something we need to move away from in the next decade or so. Why set up a permanent fuel facility for something that we actually need to be moving away from? So that is one area where we simply need to make a difference there, and I urge the Government to do that. Again, no matter what, using fossil fuels contributes to our greenhouse gas emissions; we need to make a difference.

So in terms of what we actually do, well, we do need an affordable, secure, clean energy source for the 21st century. We do need to get away from those fossil fuels. I see the members over there shaking their heads. But there is only one area where we may need to continue with some fossil fuels for a bit longer, and that is in supplying process energy—the sufficient level of energy for manufacturing in some of our industries. That could be a reason to maintain some of the fuels that we have for a short time until new methods of providing process of energy eventuate. There's some really interesting progress being made in that space, reported just in the last few weeks.

But, aside from that, if South Australia can have days when all their electricity is generated 100 percent renewable—if Victoria can do it, if Queensland did do it—so can we. We can do it with wind; we can do it with tides; we can do it with solar—solar, which operates in all sorts of weather. Then we need to think about how we build our reserve batteries. If we have sufficient batteries, we have sufficient reserve supply of power, then we can guarantee that secure supply.

Above all, we need to start thinking about power as a utility. We need to stop thinking about it as a commodity that must be sold at the highest possible price. We need to think of it as a utility that enables the rest of our economy. If we change our way of thinking, we can do better on energy.

- **SCOTT WILLIS (Green):** Everyone deserves to be able to heat and power their homes without breaking the bank. And these days, that's far from a given. Regional

industries, sawmills, factories, they're all closing down because of high power bills. Cheaper and cleaner power, that's what Kiwis deserve and it's all within our reach.

Prior to entering Parliament, I ran a peer-to-peer electricity network. It was a social business, and it was killed off by the power of the large electricity companies, the gentailers who control the market. There was no level playing field. Gentailers want us to be passive observers and consumers who just accept unaffordable power bills, not active participants in the energy system. It doesn't have to be that way. Kiwis want choice and Kiwis want to participate. We're fed up with those high electricity prices and the excuses that keep on coming. We seem to get nothing but excuses like the nonsense that the oil and gas ban has resulted in an energy crisis, or that burning fossil fuels is better than clean energy from wind and solar.

The future isn't with the fossils. Those who keep on proposing that are doing our country a disservice. You can smell the fumes on their breath as they gaslight us. The evidence is really clear that gas production peaked in 2001 and has been declining since 2014, four years before the oil and gas ban. Oil and gas companies have spent billions and come up with nothing—talk about chasing rainbows. The rapid decline in gas in our energy supply is significant. It demonstrates a lack of strategy or planning for our future and no one gains from the oil and gas ban fantasy that this Government repeats ad nauseam.

It's time to step up and take responsibility for an active role in planning our future. That would mean first addressing energy hardship. Over 100,000 people cannot afford to pay their bills. It's a choice between heating and eating. Now is the time to resource the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) and I will support any move by the Minister to ensure Budget 2026 restores EECA's budget so that Kiwi homes can be made warmer and more energy efficient.

There's much more that can be done. Reform of the electricity market to provide confidence with stable prices and investment in renewable energy and storage are key. The Government can make a big, positive difference in the lives of Kiwi households if it could just summon the courage to take on the electricity giants and place people over profit. We need to ensure those level playing field measures are implemented because what we're seeing is something that looks like they've been watered down. My bill, the Electricity Industry (Separation of Generation and Retail Businesses) Amendment Bill would ensure this, and the Government is welcome to make use of it, because we can't be afraid to do what's right for Kiwis, even if it means uncomfortable conversations.

Households all around the motu would benefit from being able to generate their own energy, their own renewable electricity from solar and batteries; a ratepayer assistance scheme, easy to implement; our Clean Power Payment \$6,000 grant \$30,000 interest free loan—very, very helpful for people who want to implement solar or insulation; and integrating mobility into our energy system will also bring

big benefits. We need to develop vehicle-to-grid capability where EV batteries can be used to inject stored energy back into businesses and households so that next winter vehicle-to-grid vehicles will be online when we need them, when high prices are there, when we've got stress on our energy system. Australia's got a model we can adopt. It works in the UK, why can't we do it here? The Frontier report showed how to bring the total cost of electricity to consumers down by over \$2 billion per year simply by taking control of Huntly and using it strategically by pricing it separately as a system backstop.

This is one thing that we can agree with. The market hasn't and isn't delivering. Our energy system is too fundamental to everything we do to sit on our hands and do nothing. A Green Government will act.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): The member's time has completed.

- **SIMON COURT (ACT):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Today, as we debate energy policy, we need to ask what matters most to Kiwis. New Zealanders don't want to hear more buzzwords and see more bumper stickers about a just transition. It's not ideology; what they want is reliability, they want affordability, and they want certainty. They want their lights to turn on when they flick the switch, they want their homes to be warm in winter, and they want their power bills to be affordable, and that's what ACT in Government is helping to deliver.
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We've made massive progress by repealing Labour's ban on offshore oil and gas exploration. That cost this country billions in dollars of economic vandalism, and it pushed us to burn more imported coal. The ban told the world that New Zealand is not serious about energy investment. It was a political stunt dressed up as policy, and New Zealanders paid the price and they know who's to blame.

Now, with ACT in Government, we're restoring energy security and investor confidence. Sovereign risk is being replaced with sovereign responsibility.

Just today, I stood in support of Minister Watts' Offshore Renewable Energy Bill. That bill, improved by the select committee process, is about turning potential into projects. It lays the foundations for private capital to build offshore wind and marine energy developments with clear rules, firm timelines, and proper protections, because if we do want affordable, low-emissions electricity, we need to unleash the full mix of wind, hydro, solar, and, of course, geothermal; gas; and—yes, that trusty black nugget—coal. If we're honest with the public, they will know that we need thermal firming in the form of gas and coal so that we can continue the renewables build-out.

Now, the Greens and Labour might not agree, but I'll tell you who knows that. All of the renewable energy companies who have come to my office and, no doubt, to other members here, have said, "If we can't get a firm thermal contract to

underpin our investment in renewables, we won't build the renewables." That's called physics; that's called finance.

Let me be clear: having gas and coal supporting our renewable build-out is not a failure; it's responsible planning. It's engineering reality, and not living in a political fantasy.

But energy policy isn't just about generation; it's about what gets built, how it gets built, how quickly, and where. That's why ACT in Government is leading the charge to replace the Resource Management Act (RMA) with a system based on property rights that respects environmental limits. For too long the RMA has choked off investment in energy infrastructure with red tape and runaway ideology—

Scott Willis: So where's the national policy statement? In June last year—in June last year. Another broken promise, with nothing there.

SIMON COURT: —and if that member—"Switched on Scott" from the Green Party—wants to contribute further to the debate, he should take another call. But this morning, I heard him say that the solution to wind turbines in New Zealand—which need mined minerals and which need petroleum products to make the resins for the turbine blades—is wooden windmills. That's what the Green member offered this morning.

Under ACT's reforms, power stations will get built, transmission upgrades will get delivered on time, and projects that generate value for New Zealanders will get out of the courts and into construction. That's how we lower bills, that's how we restore energy security, and that's how we build a system that is fit for the future.

We're also working to make New Zealand competitive internationally. Investors can choose to build in Australia or New Zealand, or somewhere else entirely. That means that our rules must be bankable, our time frames predictable, and our institutions that govern the energy sector credible, and I commend Minister Watts for the work he's doing to reform and strengthen the regulation of the system.

Now, we're delivering all of that, not by waving a magic wand, but by doing the hard work, line by line, regulation by regulation, and project by project, that the Government is providing investment capital for. ACT is ensuring, in our role in Government, that energy remains secure, affordable, and reliable. What that means is that the lights are on, homes are warm, and we have jobs to go to. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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- **ANDY FOSTER (NZ First):** Energy is our greatest infrastructural vulnerability, and we've had widespread calls for—and, actually, we've heard in this debate as well—for a long-term energy strategy, and I completely agree with that. Also, we're

working, obviously, on a bipartisan approach to infrastructure strategy. But these things need to last beyond one Government and into another Government.

New Zealand once had a competitive advantage in cheap, abundant renewable energy, but not anymore. There are three things that we need out of energy: we need cost—for it to be affordable—we need reliability, and we need sustainability; and sometimes, those things are in conflict, especially at the margin. But I do not believe what I have heard from the Opposition. What Labour did—of those three objectives—is they went for the virtue-signalling sustainability at huge cost to affordability and security. So every time you pay your electricity bill or your gas bill and it's higher than it used to be, you can say, "Thank you, Labour!", because they contributed to that. Every time a factory closes and people lose their jobs, you can say, "Thank you, Labour!", because they contributed to that. That is what the oil and gas ban did.

People from within the industry tell me that was the greatest act of economic vandalism—economic vandalism—that this country has ever seen. And this is from a party that used to be a blue-collar party—it used to be a blue-collar party—that sabotaged Northland, closed down Marsden Point, sabotaged Taranaki—with the oil and gas ban—and it's still going: central North Island. We heard Willie Jackson earlier today talking about Gilbert Sydney and his difficulty in finding a job. Well, what happened? Kinleith. Why did Kinleith close down? Why did Winstone close down? The oil and gas ban, high energy prices—all part of the same thing. That is the effect of that captain's call that that party made in 2018, what has been described as "the most catastrophic act of economic vandalism ever seen"—this is a quote from an industry insider—"in New Zealand". That is a quote.

We lost 1,000 megawatts—1,000 megawatts—of gas-fired power stations; that is the effect of that. Pre-oil and gas ban, the price of electricity was around \$75 per megawatt, and in 2024, \$250 per megawatt. The industry insiders are saying if we had not had the oil and gas ban, it would have stayed at between \$75 and \$150 per megawatt—

Scott Willis: Have you talked to anyone in the energy sector?

ANDY FOSTER: That extra \$100 - plus is the effect of that oil and gas ban, and these people on the Opposition benches do not realise it—

Scott Willis: I mean, you know that's a load of rubbish.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): Mr Willis, comments not commentary.

ANDY FOSTER: In winter 2024, what kept the lights on for Kiwi homes was industry closing down. We took 20 percent of all energy use off. That was the Winstones, Kinleiths, Methanexes—all of those kinds of business. That was the effect of that,

and that has directly gone to Kiwi jobs, like Gilbert Sydney, who Willie Jackson was talking about earlier today.

Oh, and, eventually, of course, unless we find some more gas, what's going to happen to roughly a million Kiwi homes that use gas at the moment? They are going to have to convert at the cost of something like \$10,000 to \$13,000—the current estimate per household. Those are the kinds of numbers which are coming out of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). Think of the cost of that conversion. That, again, will be "Thank you, Labour, for that!".

I visited the Glenbrook Steel Mill recently. It's a very cool, heavy industrial plant. Gosh, we haven't got too many of those left! It's great to see some products actually being made in New Zealand, and there's some good news there—

Glen Bennett: Thanks, Labour, for the Government Investment in Decarbonising Industry (GIDI) Fund.

ANDY FOSTER: Oh, there is some good news, Labour! I can say well done on the electric arc furnace, because that's really good stuff. But part of it is the rolling mill, and without that rolling mill, which cost \$2 billion back in the day, and it cost that much mostly because of union action—great—it's now at risk. Why is it at risk? Because it relies on gas, and, again, about 1,400 direct jobs and about 5,000 indirect jobs.

This is what we need: we need an electricity system that actually works for New Zealand. Yes, renewables, but also, we need the firming part of that, whether it's geothermal—just remember that solar energy works, effectively, at about 16 percent of capacity all the time; wind, about 46-, 47 percent; geothermal is about 98 percent, for example. Hydro could be about the same kind of level. So that firming capacity is absolutely essential.

Oh, and on geothermal, the other thing that I'd say, buried in Labour's brilliant—was it the three waters or 10 waters scheme; however many waters it was in the end—it was short consents for geothermal plants. What that meant is they would have had to reapply every 10 years—every 10 years—for a new consent. So basically, as soon as they got the first one, they'd have to start applying for the second one, which imposes on all the vagaries of the consenting process and, often, being held to ransom for those consents.

What that means is that you would not build a lot of those geothermal plants now, because you could not get, under those rules, a consent for long enough. So yes, we need a strategic approach. Yes, we need a mixed approach. And one other thing I want to say that is super critical: deep geothermal that Shane Jones is pushing, I think, is a really important thing. The one thing I do agree with the

Opposition on is that we do need some firming to sit behind and underpin the whole system, and the State has a role in doing that. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

- **DAVID MacLEOD (National—New Plymouth):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to speak on a matter of national significance: the role of natural gas in New Zealand's energy future.
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As the member for New Plymouth, I represent a region that has long been the cornerstone of our domestic energy system. Taranaki has powered this country for generations through innovation, resilience, and a deep commitment to energy security. And today, as we navigate the complex transition to a low-emissions economy, I say this, natural gas remains essential well into our future. Energy security is not just a luxury; it is a necessity. Natural gas currently provides about 20 percent of our electricity generation, particularly during peak demand and dry years. It is the firming fuel that steps in when the wind doesn't blow, the sun doesn't shine, and the lakes are low. Without it, we risk blackouts, price volatility, reduced productivity, and increased reliance on imported coal. That is not the future I think any of us want.

Let's be clear: renewables are the future, but they are not yet fully capable of meeting our baseload and peak demands on their own. Until we have more renewable generation and large-scale storage, natural gas is our insurance policy, a stabilising force in an increasingly complex energy system. Natural gas is not just about electrons and pipelines. It's about people. It's about jobs. It's about regional development.

In Taranaki alone, the gas sector supports thousands of skilled workers, from engineers and geologists to technicians and tradespeople. Nationally, it underpins industries that are vital to our economy, including food processing, steel, aluminium, glass, and many other manufacturing businesses. In fact, over 19,000 businesses rely on gas every single day. These are the businesses that employ New Zealanders, pay taxes, and contribute to our export earnings.

The Government's recent commitment to co-invest in domestic gas development is a vote of confidence in our energy sector. It sends a clear message: we are backing New Zealand - made energy. We are facing the challenge of restoring investor confidence, reducing sovereign risk, and ensuring that our energy future is built on a stable foundation. The Government is committed to our climate goals, but we must be pragmatic, not ideological, in how we get there.

Natural gas is the transitional fuel, a bridge that allows us to scale up renewables, develop green hydrogen, torrefy black pellets, and invest in carbon capture and storage. It gives us time to innovate without compromising reliability and/or affordability. Already, we are seeing progress. New Zealand's first biomethane-to-pipeline facility is in operation in Reporoa and hydrogen blending trials are under

way. These are the building blocks of a cleaner future, but they must be supported by a stable present. Let us not forget: a just transition is one that leaves no region, no worker, and no industry behind. Energy policy must be grounded in certainty. It must be grounded in clarity and also collaboration. This Government has taken decisive steps. We have lifted the exploration ban. We are reforming the Crown Minerals Act, and we are working with the gas industry through the Gas Transition Plan. We are building smarter, cleaner, and a more secure energy system.

In an increasingly uncertain world, energy sovereignty matters. We cannot afford to become overly reliant on imported fuels. Domestic gas production gives us control over our energy destiny. It strengthens our resilience in the face of global shocks. Natural gas is not the enemy of progress; it is an enabler of it. It is the bridge to a future powered by renewables and innovation. Let's be clear-eyed and future focused. Let's invest in what works, while building what's next. And let's ensure that New Zealand's energy future is secure, sustainable, and sovereign. Mr Speaker, Thank you.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): Before I take the next speaker, Mr MacLeod, you read that speech. Clearly, you have some good knowledge of it. I think you've been in the House long enough now to be able to, largely, leave the paper down. For the future, I'll be in the Chair watching you.

- **Hon GINNY ANDERSEN (Labour):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. The Government promised fundamental change—"fundamental reform", I think Simon Watts' words were—for the energy sector. You have so many New Zealanders who are struggling every week to be able to afford their energy bill and you have businesses shutting down. Each month, we see another business shut down because of the cost of energy. That fundamental reform that was promised by the Minister, quite simply, did not materialise.
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As well as no fundamental reform, and the disappointment that ensued, there was no actual real plan in place. I think it was Frontier Economics who was commissioned in—Frontier Economics not known for their supportiveness of renewable energy—they were asked to come in and take a look at market design and market performance. They reported back with a whole range of recommendations. So they've picked someone who they think's going to give them the answers they want, they don't give the answers that they want, and so they don't do any of it. The only things that happened was to build a container where we can buy some more natural gas at a much higher price than what we're already paying. That's not a solution.

The other solution that they've come up with is that we're just going to keep looking for some more natural gas, even though we haven't found any for—what?—20 years. Is it 20 years since we've actually discovered any? Even if we do find gas—this is a debate; I'm interested to hear the answer—in the next while, 10

years to get it online, what's going to happen between now and when you get that online? What's going to happen in that time? How many Kiwi families are going to be able to afford their power bill? How many businesses are going to close because they can't afford? There are no answers provided to that.

The next bit we saw from those reforms was we saw the Minister of Finance, Nicola Willis, write a letter—another letter; she's already written to banks and supermarkets, and maybe Fonterra too, or was that just a meeting?—to the gentailers, saying that, you know, "If you want to go and build some stuff, we think that's a great idea."

After that announcement, which was nothing apart from a letter, a big tank, and a promise to keep looking, what happened was that the profits and the shared value of all of those gentailers went up several million dollars. So try and explain that to hard-working New Zealanders who can't afford to pay for their energy bills, have been told this Government is going to deliver on the cost of living crisis, and instead what they do is they serve the big end of town by making decisions that bake in those profits and drive them up even higher. So while we can't afford our bills, those companies' share prices have gone up. I don't understand how that works at all. There was a real opportunity to relieve New Zealand businesses and households with a burden of a broken energy system, and they completely dropped the ball.

Fossil fuel companies are happy. They're happy because they have their beneficiaries from these so-called reforms, but it is not doing anything in New Zealand to save jobs or create jobs. We have a Government that has once again bowed down to those vested interests and failed to deliver for New Zealanders who are counting on them. They promised big. They raised our expectations. If he had half a brain, he would have just played it down, but he said "fundamental reform." We all got our hopes up. Promised big and they let us down. It reminds us on a daily basis how out of touch this Government is. Kiwis were promised a bold energy plan with immediate action, but thanks to this coalition of absolute chaos, they've brought no plans at all but just higher bills.

I would like to hear, in this debate, some solutions, because what we heard from the last speaker, David MacLeod, who did largely read his speech, is that natural gas is our insurance policy. That was the key line we took out of that. That's their plan: hoping to find natural gas. The question I want to ask is: if the profits that are baked into those gentailers are reliant upon fossil fuels, how does the Government plan to incentivise investment in renewables? That is the question I would love to have answered and that is the question that New Zealanders would like to have answered as well.

We have an abundance of renewable energy in New Zealand, and as much as you cry "fast track" from the mountaintops, it doesn't change the fact that you failed to

deliver on the cost of living and you simply rewarded the big end of town whose profits increased by your lacklustre announcement.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): Ms Andersen, you were talking about me, you were marginal about your accusation, but certainly when you're accusing the Chair of it, it makes it even more dire, for future reference.

- **DANA KIRKPATRICK (National—East Coast):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Today, I want to talk about the small but very industrious town of Kawerau and its enormous contribution to keeping the lights on in New Zealand. Kawerau is a great place, an extraordinary little town, wonderful natural resources and a fine community, and I'm looking forward to getting back there next week—home to 7,670 people in the land of Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau.
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Today, we're discussing energy, and I want to link the two together, because we're talking particularly about the work being done to double our renewable energy generation by 2050. I wanted to bring to the House's attention the massive contribution Kawerau was making to this objective— clever partnerships and a growth mindset, welcoming industrial development as part of their town. It's wonderful to see.

Above ground, Kawerau is the industrial engineering epicentre of New Zealand, home to a few mills and various other industrial operations, and a long-term, loyal workforce firing on all cylinders. But below ground is where it all becomes about the energy. The Kawerau geothermal field spans 35 square kilometres. It has fluid temperatures ranging from 250 degrees Celsius to, I think, 310 degrees Celsius. It has an estimated resource available of up to 570 megawatts. That's a phenomenal amount of energy. It currently produces enough energy for one-third of the Eastern Bay of plenty.

This is the kind of energy we need in New Zealand: sovereign energy, the kind no one can take away from us. Firm energy, sustainable and secure, that secures our supply; and clean energy, because geothermal plants produce 7 percent of the emissions of a typical coal plant. So how do we get more of it? Well, Kawerau will do it. In fact, they already are—the little town that could. Eastland Generation, a wonderful community trust-owned company from Gisborne in the wonderful Tairāwhiti, has partnered with a number of iwi-based partners, I guess, in Kawerau, including Kawerau A8D Ahu Whenua Trust and the Ngāti Tūwharetoa Geothermal Assets Organisation. They are doing an enormous amount of work. They are already producing 26 megawatts, 9 megawatts, 24 megawatts, and currently, in work right now, 49 megawatts of geothermal power in the station that's about to be commissioned in November.

In addition, you will have seen the announcement this week of the Government's Wood Energy Strategy, a fine piece of work. We are very pleased to say that this

week, "Minister MegaWatts" himself announced that wood energy could replace around 40 percent of fossil fuels process heat by 2015 and displace 300,000 tonnes of coal at Huntly. This would reduce reliance of our energy system on imported fuels and domestic gas, and cut down on emissions.

Kawerau already has the solution—one step ahead, again: a torrefied wood pellet project with international company Foresta, which will see the establishment of a patented pine chemical and torrefied wood pellet facility with the capacity to produce 57,000 metric tonnes of chemicals from pine trees and 216,000 tonnes per annum of black wood pellets. Foresta has advanced orders for 80 percent of its products from the first manufacturing facility, and its plan is to produce up to 2.1 million tonnes of torrefied pellets every year, which will replace the coal intake needed. This project, along with others, typifies how we create security of energy supply, regional economic growth, emissions reduction, and reasonably priced power for homes and industry.

Because when the previous Government landed on this notion that we shouldn't have coal and gas in this country and that we should wage a war on energy infrastructure like Marsden Point, they did it with no solution in hand. The international investment community lost faith in us and they took their money elsewhere, and we were left this winter wondering where the gas would come from and what would power the heaters. It was lazy thinking and tantamount to energy thuggery.

It's an inspiring time for the Eastern Bay of Plenty, for the little town of Kawerau, and the future that they hold in their hand with geothermal energy, torrefied wood pellets, and the many other things that we can do in New Zealand that come when the rain doesn't rain, when the wind doesn't blow, and the sun doesn't shine. We've got to have some other options, and this is where it's happening. This is the beginning of it all. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

- **GLEN BENNETT (Labour):** Kia ora, Mr. Speaker. I stand as a proud member of the Labour Party and a list MP based in Taranaki who's lived—for 25 years, actually—in the energy province. I've always been very proud that it is the energy province. It has the potential—and we were working on that potential—for it to continue to be the energy province, to be the clean energy province not only of Aotearoa but of the world.

I also stand here as Labour's tourism and hospitality spokesperson. As I get around the country and as I listen to people—as I meet with small businesses, large businesses, and regional tourism organisations—we often reflect on the picture that New Zealand paints to the world. Now, we look at Tourism New Zealand, and it's almost 25 years as well—that's the "100% Pure" New Zealand brand, which has been in the eyeballs, in the ears, in the stratosphere of the world around what to expect when they arrive in our beautiful and amazing country. I am committed as a

member of the Labour Party and I'm committed as a member of this community and society, to ensure that New Zealand remains "100% Pure". We need to put a line in the sand. We need to step up and not kick the can down the road but take responsibility for how we can look to our future, how we can be good ancestors and look to our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, and those who will come after us. And say, "It was hard." And say, "It wasn't easy and we weren't popular, but we did what was right so that you have the benefits of "100% Pure" New Zealand in 100 years' time."

I stand by the work that Labour in Government did. In fact, I stand by the work that the Labour and New Zealand First Government did, when they stood up on the podium and announced the fact that there will be no more offshore permits issued. Onshore was fine, and I think we got the balance about right, because I wasn't in Parliament then but I remember all of my conservative oil and gas friends were angry at me. They were angry, because what have we done? We've destroyed everything! And then, I remember all of my Green and all of my amazing friends on the left, and environmentalists, who were angry with me because we hadn't gone far enough. I think sometimes, when you have people on both sides of the argument angry with you, maybe you're getting it just about right. You're just trying to find that middle ground to move forward.

There's a lot more for us to do, but we need to be committed to the fact that we can't just keep kicking the can down the road on energy. We can't just keep kicking the can down the road to figure it out maybe in the next Parliament, or the next generation will figure it out. We need to stand up and make a stand. I am grateful for the work that was done by the Hon Megan Woods in the energy portfolio. I'm grateful to her in terms of the investment in Ara Ake, looking at new ways of creating clean energy for the future not just here in New Zealand but around the world. I'm grateful for the work that she did on green hydrogen and what it could look like, what it could do around innovation when it comes to moving heavy freight around the country and around the world. I am grateful that we are looking down at things like people's households. We're looking at people's businesses, we're looking at factories, we're looking at hospitals, we're looking at schools, we're looking at the corner dairy, at the local bakery, and even at this building—as the lights flickered as we started this debate, earlier in the afternoon.

We need to consider how we do get our energy strategy right. What do we do to ensure that all New Zealanders have access to decent, affordable, and clean energy, so that we continue to be New Zealand "100% Pure". We can all do it, if we have the will. We can do anything we want in this Parliament, if the Government has the will—they'll find the money to do what is right to supercharge clean and cheap, affordable energy. If there was the will, they would find a way.

In closing, I think that next year's election will definitely be fought as the "electric" election. I think we need to consider the fact that the price of electricity, how we

set up our grid and what we do, can and will be done. They often talk about bipartisanship or tri-partisanship, but you have to lean in, you have to have conversations with each other. We are committed to ensuring that all New Zealanders have clean, cheap, affordable energy into the future.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): The time for this debate has expired. I congratulate those hardy souls who have remained to the bitter end after three long weeks of sitting. Congratulations, and make the most of your week off. The House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, 4 November 2025.

The House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.

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