



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

FOURTH SESSION

Number 31

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

Monday

June 15, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will be hearing members' statements from members representing the Districts of Port de Grave, Trinity – Bay de Verde, Bonavista South, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Kilbride, and Tornat Mountains.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate the organizers and volunteers of this year's Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival held in Bay Roberts this past weekend. This was the third year for the event and it continues to grow and exceed the participants' expectations.

The festival is a weekend celebration of all things seafood and song. Events this year included a salmon dinner, a fish cake breakfast, a small plate reception, and a chef's seafood barbeque along with entertainment from Connemara, Irish Descendants, Jackeasy, and others.

The highlights of the weekend are the small plate reception on Friday evening, an eight-course seafood experience, prepared by some of the Province's top chefs like Rory Macpherson; Mark McCrowe (2015 Gold Medal Plate Champion); Shaun Hussey who played a huge role with the chefs; and our own Gary Gosse. On Saturday evening, the Chefs Seafood Barbeque took center stage with a five-course feast which included a variety of locally sustainable, authentic – seafood all prepared to perfection.

Other events included a culinary workshop, the toutons, tomcods and tunes with the Newfoundland and Labrador fishcake

championship and geocaching for those so inclined.

I invite all hon. members to mark your calendars and join us again next year for a seafood experience you will not forget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the 2015 Graduating Classes from the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde. Students in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde attend high school in one of three schools, Crescent Collegiate, Baccalieu Collegiate, or Carbonear Collegiate.

I recently had the opportunity to attend the graduation ceremonies for Baccalieu Collegiate, as well as Crescent Collegiate, and look forward to attending the graduation ceremony at Carbonear Collegiate on June 25. There are over 100 graduating students from the district this year. The education these students have received is a remarkable tool which will enable them to pursue their individual goals.

Graduation is an outstanding achievement for these students, but it is not the end, rather the beginning of a future filled with opportunities. I encourage all graduates to strive for excellence in whatever they may choose to do and remind them that the learning does not end here, but will continue throughout their lives.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the Trinity – Bay de Verde Graduating Classes of 2015 and all graduates throughout our Province and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to recognize and congratulate all of the Level III students in the District of Bonavista South.

Mr. Speaker, during the past few weeks, the graduating students of Discovery Collegiate, Bonavista, St. Mark's School, King's Cove, and Heritage Collegiate, Lethbridge have had the opportunity to celebrate the many years of memories and experiences that have shaped their lives. This important milestone will lead them to new and exciting endeavours as they prepare to either enter the workforce or continue on to post-secondary studies.

Mr. Speaker, these schools have prepared the students well for a world of opportunities – and many of those opportunities are right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We all recognize the value of post-secondary education for students, their communities, and the economy of the Province. We have world-class institutions which are leading the way in any number of program areas, including oil and gas, medicine, maritime studies, and engineering.

I would like to commend the parents, staff, administration, and graduates on all their hard work.

Members of the House, please join me in congratulating the leaders of tomorrow and wish them good fortune with their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to commend Christa Glover for being the first-ever female pilot to be recognized as one of the Top 20 Under 40 in the aerospace industry by *Wings Magazine* and *Helicopters Magazine*.

Christa grew up in Pinsent's Arm, a community of seventy-five people in Southeast Labrador,

and knew at a very early age she wanted to be a helicopter pilot. Following her dream, she graduated from Gander Flight Training school with both her helicopter and fixed-wing licence at the age of twenty-one.

Christa is Chief Pilot with Universal Helicopters, where she has worked for the past ten years – the first female pilot to be hired by the company, and has logged 3,500 flying hours to date.

According to the editor of the magazine, Christa had many attributes that led her to being named the Top 20 Under 40 list, including her career development, leadership ability, job performance, interaction with colleagues, and going the extra mile.

According to Christa, “soaring through the friendly skies is the best feeling in the world – it's where every pilot longs to be.”

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Christa on this prestigious recognition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: On May 21, Governor General David Johnston was in Newfoundland and Labrador to present Caring Canadian Awards to eleven individuals from this Province. One of the recipients was a person all of us in this House of Assembly know very well. That person is one of our Pages, Raylene Mackey.

Raylene was honoured for many volunteer hours devoted to many groups and activities at her school, parish, community, and Province. As a high school student from 2011-2014, Raylene was involved with nearly a dozen groups and organizations at St. Kevin's High School, while also being Student of the Year for her three high school years. In 2014, she was a provincial government URock award winner. Raylene has

won provincial golf awards, school speak offs, and many scholarships.

She has helped special athletes, seniors, and been involved with Ovarian Cancer Canada, the Parkinson Society; as well as volunteering with the Children's Wish Foundation, Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival, and the St. John's Downtown Parade. Raylene is a member of a local parish youth group in Goulds. In 2013-2014, she was Miss Teen Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Raylene for winning a Caring Canadian Award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Angajukkak of Makkovik, Herb Jacques on receiving the Wayne Earle Community Service Award at the Combined Councils of Labrador this past weekend in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The award is given to Angajukkaks, mayors, and councillors who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to municipal councils and have helped implement social and economic development opportunities in their community.

Herb was born in North West River but is from Makkovik. He was elected to council in 1996, spending five years as mayor and the last nine years as the Angajukkak of Makkovik.

Herb has been very dedicated and active in his community, having served on the Board of Directors for Labrador Legal Services and the Torngat Regional Housing Association. He became a member of the recreation commission at the tender age of fifteen.

Herb is no stranger to Combined Councils, having spent close to two decades representing the interests of Makkovik and the North Coast. He is a truly dedicated Aboriginal leader and a very worthy recipient of this prestigious award.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Angajukkak Herb Jacques on being awarded the Wayne Earle Award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to inform this hon. House that yesterday sixty-two employees of the Department of Transportation and Works undertook a cleanup of the Outer Ring Road from Logy Bay Road to Portugal Cove Road. Crews worked hard and the results were the removal of approximately 3,000 bags of garbage or twenty-five to thirty tons from the sides of the road.

Mr. Speaker, keeping our provincial highways clean and litter-free is important to the employees of the Department of Transportation and Works and to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is also important to the many visitors who travel our roads during the summer tourist season.

Every year, Transportation and Works crews undertake a cleanup of key areas of the Province's highway system. Areas of greatest concern, and therefore our areas of focus, are Pitts Memorial, the Outer Ringer Road, the Lewin Parkway in Corner Brook, and Route 450 (South Shore Highway) to the waste disposal site. In addition to these targeted cleanups, crews pick up bigger items on the provincial highways, such as large household items, on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, items that are tossed or fall from vehicles onto the road can be a safety hazard for motorists and also for the highway crews who must collect them. We remind everyone to dispose of their garbage and old household items in a responsible and appropriate manner. We all share a responsibility to protect our

environment, and to also be mindful of the safety of crews and fellow motorists.

I would like to thank the motorists for their patience during the closure of the Outer Ring Road yesterday, and we appreciate their co-operation for the second phase of the cleanup, which will begin in the next couple of weeks between Allandale Road and Topsail Road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I also want to thank the employees of Transportation and Works who went out and cleaned the Outer Ring Road this following weekend.

Mr. Speaker, 3,000 bags of garbage or twenty-five to thirty tons does not end up on this portion of the Outer Ring Road just by accident. Obviously disregard for the regulations and a failure to properly enforce the regulations are major contributing factors.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the Outer Ring Road is a major route to the Robin Hood Bay landfill facility. If we fail to enforce the regulations that are in place to ensure that this garbage does not end up on the Outer Ring Road, it is not only a hazard to motorists – especially if an item were to come out of a vehicle while in transport.

I do ask the minister – I realize you are nodding at me – to properly enforce the regulations for the safety of the motoring public as well as the workers at Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Thanks as well, Mr. Speaker, to the workers of Trans and Works who did the cleanup yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, thirty tons – a ton or two you can see with the odd mishap, but thirty tons sounds like we need a far more rigid enforcement policy on the Outer Ring Road especially. This is an infamous stretch of highway at the best of times. Hardly a day goes by without an accident of some kind up there. We still see car parts up there. I am surprised that somebody has not opened up a shop up there. Speeding is definitely an issue up there on the road.

Now we learn there is a ridiculous amount of material falling off vehicles, Mr. Speaker. It is enforcement that we need here, and we need government to deal with it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight an exciting new scholarship program being offered by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and the Women in Resource Development Corporation which will provide financial assistance to women in our Province pursuing trades and technology education.

The program will award eight students with a scholarship of \$2,000 each. These funds can be applied toward the cost of pursuing post-secondary education at any public or private institution that offers select programming, including power line technician, construction or industrial electrician, industrial mechanic, heavy duty repair mechanic, welder, carpenter, automotive service technician, and heavy equipment operator.

Women are currently under-represented in trades and technology occupations in this Province and

this funding will help remove educational and employment barriers, and financial challenges women may encounter in pursuing their career.

For those interested in learning more about this scholarship, full program details can be found on the Women in Resource Development Corporation's web site at www.wrdc.nf.ca.

Mr. Speaker, the Women in Resource Development Corporation and Newfoundland Labrador Hydro are committed to increasing women's participation in trades and technology. Certainly, we are all committed to ensuring that women throughout the Province share in our economic prosperity, and that they do so directly through the development of our natural resources.

Since 2007, through the Skilled Task Force Report, our government has committed more than \$100 million to support initiatives to help apprentices. The Office to Advance Women Apprentices was created in 2009 and has helped women make significant gains in the skilled trades. The office works collaboratively with the provincial government, industry, labour and other key groups to achieve its goals. We are continuing our efforts to help ensure under-represented groups such as women, persons with disabilities, and Aboriginal persons have the opportunity and necessary skills to secure employment.

The provincial government is fully committed to supporting women pursuing educational, employment and business opportunities within industry and we are pleased to see that same commitment coming through joint initiatives such as the scholarship program highlighted here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I too am pleased to support the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and the

Women in Resource Development Corporation in this new initiative. Adequate women's representation in all industries and trades is an important goal, one that we should all strive towards, even more representation in this House of Assembly.

It is my hope that this scholarship program will bring us closer to achieving equal opportunity for women in Newfoundland and Labrador, and address barriers to entering post-secondary programs and employment in their chosen trades.

Unfortunately, government has not adequately addressed one of these barriers. The consistent lack of up-to-date labour market information available to these women and other potential apprentices makes finding meaningful employment much more difficult. However, I commend Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and the Women in Resource Development Corporation for their efforts to support women in their trades, and the commitment to eliminating some of the financial barriers to their success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I have to say it is very satisfying, as the first Executive Director of Women in Resource Development, to see this joint initiative between NLH and WRDC.

It is true that advances are being made in creating diverse workplaces, something that has proven to benefit financially both the workers and companies. It has proven you have greater workplaces; however, retention of women in trades and technology continues to be a major issue.

It is not enough that we get women in and we have to do the upfront work, but I encourage the minister to look at the fact that retention is really

poor, not just globally but in this Province as well. The Province should support the women by finding out what those barriers are.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General released his report last week outlining the many areas this government has failed to provide proper oversight. It was shocking to learn government is not following their own guidelines when hiring external consultants. In fact, the AG says consultants for the Department of Transportation and Works were not hired competitively through an open, fair, and transparent procurement process.

I ask the Premier: Why are you not being open, fair, and transparent in the hiring of external consultants in the spending of taxpayers' money?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, last week, the Auditor General did issue his annual report, Mr. Speaker. It is a very comprehensive piece of work, as the Auditor General always does. I would, first of all, like to acknowledge receiving the report and the work that the Auditor General does.

He is of great value to us in government in providing a fresh set of eyes, quite often, a deep dive into operations of government and different government departments. We take his recommendations very, very seriously, as we have demonstrated year over year that we respond to the Auditor General's recommendations. We do take them seriously. We work very hard to make corrections where

corrections are required, often highlighted and pointed out by the Auditor General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the Premier, there are your guidelines that are already established so a deep dive into this – all you needed to do was follow the guidelines that already existed.

The AG points to major issues with oversight with the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Department of Transportation and Works. The Premier was the minister responsible for these departments for much of the period covered in these reviews. The Minister of Finance says there is no excuse for not following internal policies. He actually went on to say it is not acceptable.

I ask the Premier: If this is not acceptable, why did you fail to provide the proper oversight in these departments?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in my last answer, it is important that government policies and protocols and procedures are followed. It is also important to make sure that we have very strong operating procedures that exist in government departments that are followed by the minister and senior executives in all decisions-making processes. We acknowledge that. We acknowledge it is the right thing to do and it is important for us to do that.

In the case of OCIO, I call tell you, I am not an IT expert. I know the Minister of Finance is not an IT expert. The Minister of Business is not an IT expert. We have to rely on the expertise of what is in the department. I can tell you based on the report and what we saw occur in 2009-2010, even though there has been significant changes made in OCIO in the last number of years, I want to make sure that OCIO is

operating properly, it is set up properly, and it is established property.

As a result of that, we are going to be calling an RFP. We are going to go to the market in the coming days looking for advice and direction so we can ensure we –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, you are going to get an RFP so you can follow a guideline.

Mr. Speaker, government failed to be open and transparent and failed to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: – get Treasury Board approval before paying out \$3.2 million in contract overruns. Now, I am not so sure an RFP is going to explain to Treasury Board how they should do this; but one contract, as an example, with an original value of \$6,300 ended up costing taxpayers over \$240,000.

That is an increase of almost 4,000 per cent from the original contact – go get an RFP for that, I say. This was the responsibility, as you know, of Treasury Board which is comprised of Cabinet ministers.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't you get Cabinet to provide the proper oversight before paying out \$3.2 million for these extra contracts?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to clarify here that what we have in the Department of Transportation and Works, when

it comes to consultants' contracts, is we have a Consultant Registry. It is a Consultant Registry that is noted by my officials, that they certify that the consultants we have in place are qualified to do specific types of jobs that we need.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular case, this was an environmental assessment in a small community on the West Coast to ensure that safety was there. As we got into it and moved along, we did change orders. As we did change orders, we realized for the economy of scale and to make sure we assess this situation and addressed it so that there would be no danger to people, we moved the project along. While the money that was spent, Mr. Speaker, was spent to assist and deal with this issue, there was no additional money spent in that. That was budgeted, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the Minister of Finance needs to apologize to the Minister of Transportation and Works. Maybe he spoke out of turn, I am not sure, but the AG has reviewed the Office of the Chief Information Officer and their use of the external consultant. So the AG actually did this work. He found that cost and timelines were not being monitored and there were no documented reasons to account for the overruns.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't you provide the oversight to ensure that these projects were being effectively monitored?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the course of the last couple of years the Office of the Chief Information Officer has made some significant changes in their

processes for managing large-scale and small-scale projects, Mr. Speaker, of how we look at issuing RPs, how we actually define the scope of work to be done, and how we monitor contracts that we do put in place.

I want to make sure – as the Premier just pointed out, we want to make sure that those processes reflect current day best practices and we want to make sure that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, or the member opposite?

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

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, we want to make sure that the current process does reflect current day reality, I say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: The members opposite obviously do not want an answer to the question, but if they do, Mr. Speaker, I am only too glad to provide it.

As I was saying, we want to make sure the processes that were implemented do reflect current day reality. As the Premier has pointed out, within the next couple of days – in fact, the RFP is being reviewed by Justice as we speak. We want to make sure we bring in some IT experts to have a look at the processes that we have implemented, to make sure they do reflect current day best practices, and within a couple of days we will have that process concluded.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The AG reviewed \$1.6 million in travel costs for these consultants and found that there were 81 per cent not supported by receipts. You do not need an RFP to tell you that this is really a basic function. One consultant was paid over \$21,000 for miscellaneous expenses with no supporting documentation. We need an answer for this. The people are looking for an answer.

So I ask the Premier: Why did you allow these payments to be made without any supporting documentation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General has a significant role to play in pointing out areas and opportunities for making improvements in our systems, and that is what this report has done. What we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is we want to augment the work of the Auditor General. We want to make sure we have appropriate processes that will not only reflect some of the things that the AG reviewed of two or three years ago, but a number of things have lapsed since that period of time.

So we want to make sure that what we have done in the last two or three years reflect best practices and we are well-positioned to take on major projects, because there are going to be advances in IT systems in the next couple of years and well into the future, I suspect. We want to make sure we have the kind of robust oversight in place that is required to make sure that we have good fiscal management systems in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess I will ask the Minister of Finance this, because we are talking about some very –

these are normal practices, best practices in just about every community that we live in.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Is it now the best practice of your department to actually at least go get receipts and documentation before paying a bill?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago; we want to make sure that what we do reflects current best practices, not only in internal controls, but how we manage major IT projects. So we want to make sure we have a robust system in place. That is what we are going to achieve by bringing in some outside IT experts to be able to provide some structural advice, how we manage projects, how we structure ourselves to provide IT supports throughout government and all its departments throughout the entire Province. That is what this initiative is intending to do.

We want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, the things that the Auditor General has identified that are not acceptable, not a reflection of best practices, do not reflect what we believe to be good fiscal management. We want to make sure those systems and those oversight processes are strengthened and serve us well into the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General has found that even though a competitive open, fair, and transparent process for engaging consultants can contribute greatly to the success of a project, none of this happened in the Department of Transportation and Works.

I ask the minister: Why the AG could not identify instances where guidelines were followed to appoint consultants, and more importantly, could not find sufficient

documentation to support the rationale for the minister directly appointing consultants.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Premier has outlined, we respect the work of the Auditor General and the recommendations. As part of that process, I am sitting down with my officials and we are re-examining the process we use.

As I outlined earlier, there is a Consultant Registry which is part and parcel made up of recommendations and assessments, through my staff, around who are qualified to do specific projects, Mr. Speaker. We have a process in place.

We want to ensure that the people of this Province get the return on their investment. We want to ensure that we do not bring government to a halt and we move our projects forward. We want to make sure that the people in our industries have the ability to move the projects to the next level, Mr. Speaker.

That is what we have done here. In some cases, we have change orders which change the scope of the costing on these projects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: The rules are in place; they just did not follow them.

Mr. Speaker, section 2.4 of the Consultants Guidelines clearly states that in cases of contracts awarded at set amounts, departments must receive Treasury Board approval to authorize payments which are in excess of 110 percent of the original contract.

Of the sixteen projects that were reviewed by the AG, ten of these projects received excess

payments that the minister failed to receive Treasury Board approval. Some of the projects received payments many times higher than the original contract.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the member to quickly ask his question.

MR. OSBORNE: I ask the minister why payments that did not receive proper Treasury Board approval were made on contracts where the consultant was hand chosen by the minister.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to note a couple of other things also. These are consultants. These are brought in when there are particular projects or there are particular issues that we need to address. These are all professional companies or individuals who are certified in their respective fields, Mr. Speaker.

It has been a practice that has been going on for decades in Administrations. It is this Administration that has taken it to the next level of putting in policies to ensure that we use the process better, Mr. Speaker, and we have done it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: In the case of where the Auditor General has identified some issues, it has been based on change orders, where we brought in a particular consultant to give us some advice and to take it to one stage, move to the next stage with change orders. That is why the changing in the costing here, Mr. Speaker. The same amount of money was spent. We got the job done by professional people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Not only do they not follow the rules, they deny not following the rules.

As a result of determining the department was not obtaining Treasury Board approval, the Auditor General further investigated and found an additional seventy-one companies. Of those, fifty of those companies did not receive Treasury Board approval. There were millions of dollars paid out without Treasury Board approval.

I ask the minister: How can a project that had an original value of less than \$180,000 get funding for over \$1.2 million without Treasury Board approval? The only thing transparent here, Mr. Speaker, is that they do not believe they need to follow the rules?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We deal with thousands of companies a year, Mr. Speaker, because we want to ensure that services are provided for the people of this Province and we want to ensure we get a good value for the money we spend, and we have done that. The Auditor General has not noted that the money did not go where it was supposed to, that the right amount of money was paid.

There is a process here around the procedure we use, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has outlined, we have gone back to look at that and look at what our policies are, or how we better use those policies and implement those policies, but I want to reassure everybody here, projects were completed. They were completed in a timely fashion and they benefit the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker. That is what we do as a government here; we benefit the people of this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General's report, it appears as if the Office of the Chief Information Officer was skirting the rules when it came to work orders. There are examples of statements of work that were changed so dramatically that cost doubled, and in one case they quadrupled, going from \$280,000 to over \$1.1 million.

I ask the minister: Why was this office allowed to engage in such lax financial practices?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to make sure the member's opposite and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador appreciate my comments I have already made with respect to, not just this issue, but with respect to the Auditor General's report. We take those recommendations very seriously.

Any area where there is opportunity for improvement, we will take those recommendations and we will implement. We are going to implement all the recommendations in this report, like we are committed to working on the recommendations in all the previous reports. That is how we do business, Mr. Speaker. We take those Auditor General reports very seriously.

Any time that there is a non-compliance with a practice or procedure, that is unacceptable. We do not accept that. We want to change that, and that is what we are doing here, but because this is such a technical area and requires such technical expertise to make sure we have appropriate oversight, that is why we are bringing in some IT experts to give us a hand on helping to put in place a very robust, oversight process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, one of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report is beyond disturbing. I quote, "The OCIO should ensure that there is an adequate system in place to monitor project costs." This is the most basic of operational requirements for any department of the government.

I ask the minister: Based on these disturbing reports, will you call for a full operational review of this office?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for OCIO.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately Hansard is not available until tomorrow, so the member opposite will not get a chance to review my last four or five comments. I have been on my feet about four times on this same issue.

Let me repeat for clarity. I said we have an RFP that is being reviewed by legal counsel. Within probably twenty-four hours, an RFP will be on the street to do just that, Mr. Speaker. That is the IT expertise that I talked about bringing in to provide the kind of information that we need, and some advice we need to make sure that there is a very robust oversight process in place.

I am not sure how much clearer I can make that. It will happen within twenty-four hours. You will see it on the street tomorrow. As I say, Mr. Speaker, if that does not provide additional clarity, Hansard tomorrow will record everything that I said, and members opposite can probably read it at that time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, when we asked last week about government's failed mismanagement of the Labour Market Development Agreement, the minister said it is

working extensively well. The next day the Auditor General reported numerous deficiencies related to financial monitoring, evaluation, and project management of the agreement.

I ask the Premier: Do you agree with your minister that it is working extensively well?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the member's question. First of all, let me say very clearly that we accept the recommendations of the Auditor General's report as it pertains to that topic. I will certainly use the recommendations to build upon changes we have already made.

I can say to the member and to members of this House that a number of changes have been made in the Department of Advanced Education and Skills to deal with some of these particular deficiencies. Service standards have been implemented, Mr. Speaker. Very strong and very clear performance standards and indicators, and quality measurements have been established.

We have had further employees who are targeted with the job specifically of assessing applications and making sure that there are specific criteria that are met before they are deemed to be qualified and eligible for funding. We will take the recommendations of the AG, Mr. Speaker, and we will incorporate that to further build upon the changes we have made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: It looks like we have some changes being implemented since Thursday. After blowing over \$9 million on a completely mismanaged project for case management software, government had to spend another \$5 million to implement Nova Scotia's system. Government paid \$1 for Nova Scotia's system and almost \$5 million to implement it.

I ask the minister: Why didn't you bother to consult Nova Scotia in the first place rather than wasting over \$9 million in taxpayers' dollars?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, as I already indicated in this House, that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – ministers, myself as Premier, the Minister of Finance has said earlier, the Minister of Business has said earlier, we are not IT experts, Mr. Speaker. We do not in any way, shape, or form have any background – I do not have a background in IT to that depth and knowledge, but we want to make sure we get it right. We do want to make sure we get it right.

Since 2009-2010 when the LMDA project first got underway, I can tell you first-hand there has been many changes made to OCIO, but we cannot rest there. We cannot stop there. We need to make sure that we are getting best value for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We need to make sure we are getting state-of-the-art operating systems that can provide best services and best operational assistance and supports to a broad range of programs.

To do that, Mr. Speaker, we are going to go to the street. We are going to seek the advice of experts. Even though the members opposite mocked us for it when I said it earlier, now they are even asking for it and we have already said we are going to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There was \$935,000 paid in error to nearly 430 seniors over ten years and now legal action has

been taken against government for their attempt to take back pension overpayments from seniors.

I ask the Premier: Since this is now public knowledge, what is the government's response to this legal action and what will government's response cost?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the member for her question. I heard – maybe as she has – through the media, that such an action has been initiated. I have not seen the documents that have been filed with the courts yet, but when we do, we will have an opportunity to review them and provide a response at that time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This court action further puts government's actions in question. Seniors are getting mixed messages on the criteria established for collection and the amounts sought after, and if they will be forced to pay it all back. Apparently, Mr. Bonnell is asking seniors to make him an offer.

I ask the Premier again: What are the specific criteria established by government on if seniors will have to pay this money back or not?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very serious matter for many, many reasons. We wanted to ensure that we were not providing any undue hardship, unbearable hardship to seniors. Mr. Bonnell who has an extensive background in financial dealings for people on a very personal level, who has a

lifetime in banking, actually – he is seniors' advocate and representative in his own right, provincially recognized as a leader in seniors programs and supporting seniors. We know, and I know, and members over here can tell you –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – experiences that constituents have had, their own constituents have had in dealing with Mr. Bonnell, they have found him to be professional, to be caring, and to be considerate in working out arrangements for them that were more than acceptable and beyond what any of them had expected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Premier that the question was very specific about what exactly are the criteria that Mr. Bonnell is using to ask for this money back.

Will the Premier clarify for these seniors who are worried about when they are going to be met by Mr. Bonnell's request to make a deal?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

As I said, it is a very important matter, especially to seniors who are impacted by these circumstances. Some of them have been impacted and it has been ongoing for many, many years. What the minister has done is he put a process in place to make sure that they are fairly represented, that seniors' best interests are at hand, first and foremost, and that there is not undue hardship placed against any of those seniors.

What Mr. Bonnell is doing is he is applying all of the circumstances, because we know that seniors all have different circumstances and can vary very, very broadly, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: What he is doing is he taking all of their circumstances into consideration – probably much as he did as a personal banker for many, many years. Then he is helping them and suggesting to them how we can move forward without any undue hardship on those seniors.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile has time for a very quick question.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, for the paramedics protesting outside Confederation Building today for unsafe working conditions and how it affects patients, I ask the Minister of Health: What are you doing to make sure that these conditions that have existed for well over a decade are being taken care of?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the issues that have come out of the provincial road ambulance review through ongoing negotiations with the various groups of ambulance operators in the Province. I am pleased to report that we have signed agreements with twenty-two community ambulance operators. We are very, very close to finalizing an agreement with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Ambulance Services. In fact, we expect an agreement very soon – we are finalizing contract language.

Once that is done, I suspect we will be able to get the other agreements finalized in short order to address wages, to address scheduling, to address staffing issues, which are legitimate concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General's negative report on food quality and safety in long-term care facilities gives credence to complaints I have received, both in writing and orally, regarding the food at the St. John's long-term care facility. The minister's response was: Residents get nutritious snacks and cannot be forced to eat healthy food.

I ask the minister: When will he quit the defensiveness, identify deficiencies, and get them fixed now?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi and I can assure all members that the menus in our long-term care facilities are approved by a registered dietician and they adhere to Canada's Food Guide. When the Auditor General did his review he only looked at the master menu in our homes, he did not factor in other food that is provided to residents throughout the day.

It is also important, Mr. Speaker, that we balance meeting Canada's Food Guide with the preferences of residents as well, the people who live in these homes. They have a right to make decisions about their own diet and their own nutritional needs as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General also said that residents are not always getting assistance with their meals – and I have reports on that – and that food trays are being left to grow cold because no one comes to feed them. I have had complaints of residents regularly waiting up to two hours for help.

I ask the minister: What is he going to do about this clear issue of understaffing? Because that is the issue.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure members of the House that in our long-term care facilities staff does provide supervision. These staff, who are professionally trained, use their own clinical judgment to decide what level of supervision is required depending on the patient, depending on the resident. Those are the facts.

We take the issues raised by the Auditor General extremely seriously. We are committed to reviewing standards. We are committed to working with the regional health authorities to ensure that standards are indeed met.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the retention of personnel to work in ambulance services in rural regions of the Province is a very serious issue. We are losing our trained people.

How is government going to guarantee that ambulance service is going to exist for everyone if contract talks keep falling off the rails like they do?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, there is a little bit of irony in the member's question. We are talking about a hon. member who stood on the steps of Confederation Building an hour ago and said that the NDP would do away with all the private ambulance operators in communities serving this Province. That is what we are dealing with.

In the meantime, the issues that are being raised by paramedics are very, very concerning. That is why we conducted a provincial ambulance review. It is why we are engaged in negotiations right now to address some of the issues related to staffing and scheduling, and other concerns that are legitimate concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: We have reached an agreement with community ambulance operators. We are about to reach an agreement with the large private ambulance operators, and I hope that the remaining group, which is a much smaller group, we will be able to reach an agreement with in short order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Private ambulance operators have been without a contract for close to two-and-a-half years.

So I would like to ask government: It has been two-and-a-half years since we saw the last agreement –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: – why has it taken two-and-a-half years too long in meeting the needs of both the paramedics and the private ambulance operators?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, on one hand, the hon. member is now asking questions about ongoing

negotiations with private operators in our Province, and on the other hand, he has the nerve to stand on the steps of Confederation Building an hour ago and suggest they should not exist. There is something incredibly disingenuous about that.

What I can report, once again, is we have reached an agreement with the community ambulance operators. It addresses many of the issues related to staffing, wages, and scheduling that are legitimate concerns that our paramedics in this Province have. In addition to that, we are days away from finalizing an agreement with the large Ambulance Operators Association which represents most of our ambulances and paramedics in the Province. I suspect a deal with the smaller operators will follow in short order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I am certainly hopeful of that, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure you this is a top priority.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You are on a roll today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring forward the following private member's resolution to be debated on Wednesday:

WHEREAS seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador have the lowest median income amongst all provinces; and

WHEREAS seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador have remained at the very bottom in median after tax income amongst provinces since 2003 despite billions in oil revenue and a poverty reduction strategy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED this hon. House urge government to commit to a poverty reduction strategy designed specifically to target seniors' poverty.

Mr. Speaker, that is seconded by my colleague from the Straits – White Bay North.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private member's resolution entered by the Member for CBS is the one to be debated this Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

To the House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS privatized nursing homes lower operating costs by paying lower wages, de-unionizing, laying people off, and cutting staff in these facilities; and

WHEREAS studies have established that for-profit nursing homes are associated with lower quality of services and poorer resident health

outcomes, including an increased risk of hospitalization; and

WHEREAS Auditors General of the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario have reported the P3's cost taxpayers more;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately stop the privatization of long-term care.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand and speak to this concern, which is being expressed by people from all over the Province. I notice that the petition I hold in my hand today has been signed by people from the St. John's area, people from Corner Brook, people from the Dunville-Placentia area, from Paradise, and Port Saunders. It is quite a variety of people who have signed his petition.

I am happy to speak to it because I have so much information that what they are saying is correct. This government keeps ignoring the proof that privatization with long-term care is something that is just not acceptable.

An institute in Alberta, the Parkland Institute, studied what is happening in Alberta because of for-profit companies taking over long-term care. It is a tremendous study that they have done and it shows, number one, how the numbers of people in long-term care being taken care of by for-profit companies has grown. The other thing it has shown – this is the thing I wanted to say today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: They have proven in their report that as more services has been provided by for-profit enterprises and as the available supports have decreased, elder care in Alberta has gone from bad to worse.

Now, this is what this government is going to be laying on the people of this Province. We already have it identified that even in the

government's own facilities things are not going well. Just think what is going to happen when you have for-profit enterprises running our long-term care having to make money, as these enterprises are doing in Alberta, and having to give services to people and have a labour force that is being treated fairly and paid fairly with benefits. What has happened in Alberta is that the services have gone down, but the companies themselves, Mr. Speaker, are making gross profits.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member her time has expired.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay is in deplorable condition and requires immediate upgrading; and

WHEREAS the condition of the highway is causing undue damage to vehicles using the highway and is a safety hazard for the travelling public; and

WHEREAS both residential and commercial traffic has increased dramatically with the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway and increased development in Labrador; and

WHEREAS cold patching is no longer adequate as a means of repair;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately allocate resources to Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that allows for permanent resurfacing of the highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend in Goose Bay the forty-third annual Combined Councils of Labrador was held. I thank the Minister of Transportation and Works for attending a portion of that. It was no surprise to me that transportation was one of the main topics of discussion at the Combined Councils of Labrador.

One of the first questions that were asked to the minister when he spoke there was: Where is Route 510, L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay, on your list of priorities? It is a huge safety concern. It is a piece of road, Mr. Speaker, where the pavement is long past its expiration date, thirty-six, close to forty years old. It is a huge, huge safety hazard for the travelling public, the tourist season that is coming on now, and people travelling not familiar with the road.

Mr. Speaker, there was discussion there again at the Combined Councils on all of the vehicles that have to swerve out into private businesses and parking lots to get around the humongous craters that are in the road. The cold patch is continuing, but it is inadequate. The time has come for the minister to announce what is the plan to resurface Route 510. I will continue to stand on my feet and offer petitions on behalf of the people who have to drive that road every single day.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS EMS workers throughout rural Newfoundland and Labrador should receive equal wages, benefits, health and safety protection, and most importantly, respect and fairness in the workplace; and

WHEREAS ambulance services throughout the Province are crucial and vital services for all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS negotiations should focus on providing quality, twenty-four hour services as opposed to focusing on call volume;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to recognize and act on the principle of equal pay for equal work.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to stand this afternoon and enter this petition. This petition came from the protest at lunch hour on the steps of Confederation Building. It was very interesting to hear the workers and the paramedics and the emergency service workers over lunch hour talk about the issues that they face day in and day out. These ambulance workers, EMS workers, and paramedics are on call twenty-four seven and, in lots of cases, they have varying wages, varying levels of service and pay.

It was interesting – one story over lunch hour was that one worker had to pay for alterations to a uniform, and the alterations to the uniform were about the cost of a new uniform. So, Mr. Speaker, it is time the government brought in some steady standards, contracts that are longer in term to ensure that these services have the adequate funding that is required.

Just quickly for a second, Mr. Speaker, the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde has four community-based ambulance services. We have a community-based ambulance service in Heart's Delight-Islington, one in Winterton, one in Old Perlican, and one on the North shore. I am quite familiar with these services and I am quite familiar with the people who provide these services. They spend twenty-four hours, seven days a week, 365 days a year being tied to a pager, and providing services that are essential in rural Newfoundland and Labrador – as essential as they are in any other part of the Province. Sometimes it feels like they are not getting the respect they deserve.

I thank the workers from these ambulance services for what they do for our communities, for all of our people. Again, Mr. Speaker, we call upon the government to take the necessary action to ensure that these workers are treated with the utmost respect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS there is no traffic signage or traffic control devices present for eastbound traffic from Whitbourne, or the oncoming westbound traffic from the east end of Tilton, or exiting from either Route 73 off the Veteran's Memorial Highway from Harbour Grace; and

WHEREAS due to the increased residential dwellings, residents with small children, and a resident living with a hearing impairment, inadequate signage and no visible sidewalks increase the risk of residents being hit by oncoming traffic; and

WHEREAS the speed limit is fifty kilometres an hour; and

WHEREAS dangerous driving motorists drive excessive speeds beyond the speed limit; and

WHEREAS there is no traffic signage to advise motorists they are entering a residential zone, non-confirmative drivers do not have enough time to slow down;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to erect adequate traffic signage and traffic control devices and revisit and reduce the speed limit from the current fifty kilometres an hour.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is coming from the New Harbour barrens over towards the Tilton area. The problem with it, of course, is all along that route when you get on it over in New Harbour, you come on through there 80 kilometres an hour. So what is taking place is there is no signage saying a reduced speed should be taken around where those residents are. There is absolutely no signage there whatsoever.

The residents in that area are quite concerned about the situation. There are young children there. Of course they are coming through there eighty kilometres an hour so if some small child happens to get hit there – they are showing concerns. There is also a lady there who has a hearing impairment.

Again, for the drivers not to be warned that they are actually supposed to slow down to fifty kilometres an hour, that gives those residents in the Tilton area a great concern.

Mr. Speaker, I do know the Minister of Transportation had an email sent to him today speaking about this. I certainly hope they take a very favourable look at least putting the signage on it that needs to be on it so no accident or anything takes place in that area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS Route 438 (Croque-St. Julien's/Grandois Road), a former woods road, is nearly thirty kilometres of gravel road; and

WHEREAS the students, workers, and residents much travel this road for all education, health, business, and other services; and

WHEREAS the Department of Transportation and Works has no immediate plans to do major upgrading on Route 438, despite the current road conditions being disgraceful, and

WHEREAS it is the government's obligation to provide basic infrastructure to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to allocate funds in the provincial roads program to improve Route 438.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Main Brook and Croque. This is a road that was put in place by the Pilgrim brothers because of the lumber industry and forestry being very vibrant going out to this particular peninsula.

There have been finds around minerals, marble, copper, gold, and other samples listed there, but when it comes to the overall economic activity right now, it is stagnant. These residents who live in Croque and Grandois, St. Julien's deserve to have a good quality road infrastructure.

Even though the Department of Transportation and Works is adding some stone and doing grading, as soon as it is being added and because there is no roller, because there is inadequate equipment, it is being pushed off the road. It is a very treacherous road that needs focus. It does need upgrade. I would ask the minister to put some focus on looking at the gravel roads that are in our inventory. I have highlighted that around Route 434, Conche Road.

I think it is highly important that when we look at maintaining and the infrastructure piece, that the Ministerial Statement that was talking about making sure the roadways are clean and things like that – but we also need to make sure those students, those workers, and everybody who are travelling from Croque, St. Julien's and Grandois, they have to leave their community basically for all services so they should have a good, safe road to travel under. So I put forward this petition on behalf of my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: – the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS in 2011 the provincial government announced it would lift the 8 per cent provincial portion of the HST off residential heat and light by introducing the Residential Energy Rebate; and

WHEREAS heat is a necessity of life and a health concern, particularly for seniors; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has projected oil prices to increase in the next five years;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to stop taxing home energy and to reverse its decision to abolish the Residential Energy Rebate.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the residents of Conception Harbour, St. Anthony, and Rocky Harbour for sending these petitions in today as I enter them into the House record. If you are a heating oil user, today you may have gotten notice from your particular supplier that the Residential Energy Rebate will be over in July and you will start to see the 8 per cent tax back on your bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am one of those people who have received notice of that already. That is a substantial hit to take again after government took the tax off in – I think it was 2011, in the 2012 Budget, I should say. It was a substantial move on government's part at that particular

time, and it came from this side of the House. It was a record of accomplishment that we finally got this done. We had 55,000 people sign a petition back in 2001 asking government to do this move, because they thought it was abhorrent in itself to be taxing home energy to the point that it was no longer recognized as a necessity here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very cold climate here in the Province. As you know, it can get very costly for things like heating oil, as well as for electricity. We know that electricity costs are going to be going up. Some of the projections, even from Muskrat Falls, would have you guessing as regards to how much we are going to be paying in the future.

Mr. Speaker, nonetheless, we still have 8 per cent that is taken out of people's pockets in the form of disposable income that could have gone back into the economy. We know food costs in this Province are extremely high as well. This is money that is taken out of the economy and it is going to have to go towards a necessity of life again because government decided to take the tax and put it back on.

Mr. Speaker, again, we hope that government would listen when it comes to taking this tax off, when it comes to the Residential Energy Rebate. We know government has speculated already about the whole idea of the removal of the 2 per cent HST. They still do not know whether they are going to be putting it on or taking it off again. There is still time, obviously, for government to reconsider its position when it comes to the whole idea of adding the tax on heat again.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people from Rocky Harbour, St. Anthony, and Conception Harbour (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call from the Order Paper, Motion 5, to move pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Monday, June 15, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to now call Motion 6, to move pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Monday, June 15, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is this House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call Motion 7, to move pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to move Motion 8, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, June 16.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House do not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to move Motion 9, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion is that for Thursday of this week, June 18, the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call Motion 10, pursuant to Standing Order 11, the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that for Thursday, June 18, of this week at 10:00 p.m. the House not adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 7. So moved by me, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the said bill be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act be now read a third time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 7)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has been read a third time. It is ordered that the bill do pass and that its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 7)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call second reading, Order 7, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Act, Bill 13, from the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER: Resuming debate on Bill 13.

Are there any further speakers to Bill 13?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to get up here today to speak on this bill, Bill 13.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take my full time today because we already debated the bill here in January. I think the consensus we had back then was that it was a good move, that the House should reduce the seats from forty-eight down to forty. We all voted on that on the understanding there were going to have to be big changes. Obviously, if you take eight seats away from forty-eight there are going to be big changes to the whole boundaries, and obviously there is going to be a big effect on a lot of members who are here in the House of Assembly.

I voted at that time not knowing what was going to happen to my district, and not knowing whether I was going to lose a certain portion or I was going to gain another portion, or perhaps even in some cases that happened here in the House where some districts were dissolved altogether because of the way the boundaries came down and stuff like that, but I voted. When I voted to reduce it from forty-eight to forty, I voted because it was the right thing to do.

No matter what the impact is on myself, and the impact on others here now, I do not think I should change my vote because it affects me as a person, or it affects me as an individual because I think we all agree in this House that we should reduce it to make sure – where we are with the rest of Canada, we were on a very low scale and moving up to about 13.5 representatives. We are at the lower end still with the number of constituents we have to represent here in the House of Assembly.

In just saying that, and I respect and I understand people getting a little bit antsy about losing their seats and whatnot but on the real thing here, this was the right thing to do. We all voted for it and understood there were going to be consequences afterwards, that some people were going to lose their seats and some people were going to have districts that were dissolved completely. We will see as the vote comes. I hope people vote because it was the right thing to do not because it affects them in a certain way. I think that is what we have to look at on this vote.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk a little bit about my own district, the District of Cape St. Francis. In times gone by it was called St. John's East Extern, when a former good friend of mine, Mr. Tom Hickey, was here. I was speaking with Mr. Hickey the other day, to let the people of the Province know. I know he was very well respected in this Province. He is doing well. If you ever want to talk politics, give him a call because he will keep you on the phone for about an hour. He is still in tune with the political life, and he has not changed.

A lot of times I get up and I speak about former members, and I do not mention Mr. Hickey, but he made a great contribution to this Province. He served in portfolios as ministers of the Crown and different things. He did a fantastic job, and it is nice to see that he is still doing so well. It was nice to be able to talk to him.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, in my District of Cape St. Francis in the earlier years –and it has changed a lot because of the growth in the area and the communities down, we call it down on the East. Cape St. Francis in the earlier days was called St. John's East Extern. When my father was there, it covered right into Virginia Park, Wedgewood Park, and took in Airport Heights and the whole area. Then it changed.

When Mr. Jack Byrne became the member, it changed a little bit. They took out Virginia Park and Wedgewood Park, but he still had Airport Heights. Then it changed again – because they do change as populations grow. It changed where – the Stavanger Drive area grew up so fast, that the Airport Heights area was taken away from it.

So in Cape St. Francis right now as it exists today, it has a good portion of St. John's in there. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank those people in the area. I want to thank the people in the Stavanger Drive area, Ann-Jeannett trailer park, and people up along Majors Path going right up to the airport, for their support. They supported me and I really have to thank them. As I knocked on the door I was treated with courtesy, and very nice people. I really want to thank them.

If the changes come in and this bill goes ahead, it looks like I am going to lose that portion of my district, which is basically the St. John's portion of the district, which is the Stavanger Drive area and that area. Now I am going to have – which are the communities in my area.

The communities in my area really, I have to say, work closely together. I have to give the mayors in the area a lot of credit. The Mayor of Torbay, Mr. Ralph Tapper, the Mayor of Bauline, Chris Dredge, the Mayor of Flatrock, Darrin Thorne, the Mayor of Pouch Cove, Joedy Wall, the Mayor of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, John Kennedy, along with the Mayor of Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, they have regular meetings. They get together and talk about things in the district, whether it is transportation, whether it is recreation, whether it is anything to do with any municipal function at all, whether it is fire protection. They do clean ups. They correspond their festivals so one does not overlap with the other. They work very closely together.

I have to say that with the new district, if this bill gets passed, it is a very nice district. What is happening right now is that these communities really work closely together. I attend the meetings with them, also along with the Minister of Transportation whose area is Portugal Cove-St. Phillips. We attend the meetings and we have a great discussion. They do a lot of stuff together, so it is important.

That is an important part for all of Newfoundland and Labrador. While we all want top-notch services and stuff like that, it is so important that our municipalities work together and share services, and do things together so that it does not have an overlap. Maybe the cost of a recreation program for a couple of communities,

or the fire protection, bringing in three communities rather than have fire trucks in each community and stuff like this. Then it is the cost to the taxpayers in those areas that they can get their services, whether it is snow clearing, whether it is garbage collection or anything at all, can be done top notch because there is a few dollars there to pay for that. It is important when we look at the boundaries we are doing here today, that we reflect on what the services are that we offer the people in those areas.

Like I said, in Cape St. Francis right now I am very pleased as a member. I have to say I had a lady call me from the Torbay Road area. I have been dealing with her. Not really helping – she is a good supporter of mine. She calls on a regular basis. Anything I can do for any of my constituents, I try to do it. She said: Kevin, whatever happens it looks like you are not going to be our MHA anymore, but you will always be my MHA.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, that is a good thing with this job because a lot of times as you go around there are things that are hard and decisions have to be made, but you have to be honest with people. You have to let them know whether you can help them or just say listen, this is the way it is, I am sorry. At least if you talk to them and be upfront and honest with people, people really appreciate it.

This lady, I have to say – like I told a few other people in the area that I know I am not going to be their representative anymore. Any time at all, pick up the phone and give me a call, if there is anything I can do for them in that area. I really mean that because they showed me the support.

I always get up and say how Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are. We go around and knock on doors. I am sure we will all be at it again this fall, most of us out around this summer doing our thing, our politicking thing and whatever, but people are generally really, really nice to you. We are very fortunate to be living where we are because I would not like to have too many people slamming the door in your face or anything like that, but that is not happening.

Mr. Speaker, all I am doing here today is I would like to thank the people that I represent. My district has changed a little bit. I am going to put out something and let everybody in my district know how the district has changed. I would like to thank the people who have supported me over the last number of years and thank them for the different things they have done.

Again, we are all here to support the constituents of our districts. There are going to be a lot of changes, but the changes that are made, we all voted here in January for those changes. Now, whether they affect a different person or stuff like that, I think the right thing is getting done. I hope people vote because it is the right thing to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am just going to stand and have a few minutes on Bill 13. I guess Hansard is a wonderful thing. I heard the member just speaking. He spoke very good about his district and very well, talking about the reason why we voted, but the Minister of Transportation and Works on Thursday talked about how he followed the master plan, that is why this was done. So there is a bit of conflict there.

The Minister of Transportation and Works had a chance to get up and explain what he meant about the master plan and how they foiled it. I am just assuming that this Bill 13 was to foil some plan, not to save the millions of dollars that the Premier himself went out and said the reason why it was done. The minister will have an opportunity later to say that either the Premier is incorrect or what he said was incorrect. He can decide which one it is. I know he was brought to the wood shed by the Minister of Finance already, maybe today the Premier also.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak on the electoral boundary changes. I am just going to give a brief history when this was brought back in – the original bill that came in was for thirty-eight seats. It was not for forty. It was for thirty-eight seats. What happened – I just have to give a history of this. Mr. Speaker, this is the most damming part of this bill. When it came in for thirty-eight seats, there was no protection for Labrador. With the uniqueness and the vastness, there was no protection whatsoever for Labrador.

I know the members opposite are looking and I will just go through a history of it. When this bill came in, it had three parts to it. By the time we realized from government that this was going to happen, we said okay, sure, let's go through the process and do it. Mr. Speaker, there were three amendments made to this bill by this Opposition – three of them. The proudest one that I have, and this was compounded, is to protect Labrador and its uniqueness. Because we protected Labrador, because we protected this uniqueness, there were two extra seats added for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We all voted for it. I voted for it, I stand by it, and I have absolutely no problem in defending it. I just want to give a brief history of it and how this came about.

The Minister of Transportation and Works can give his own reasons why it was done, but that is what the Premier said. I can only assume whatever the Premier of the Province says in this House of Assembly that it is factual. I have no doubt that it is not, but I guess the Minister of Transportation and Works has a different story on it.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to also thank Judge Stack and the Commissioners for this because I am sure around the Province and in some of their submissions they got a lot of gut-wrenching stories about the towns being together and why they should be together, about communities being separated. For those individuals and the staff to go around to hear those arguments face to face, and get them sent in, it is gut wrenching for them. I just wanted to thank the Commission for the work they did, and the staff who carried out this work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to a speech I gave in the closing of Bill 13. I have been through this before. I am one of the lucky ones or unlucky ones who has been through it before, on two occasions actually. One there were no changes, and one there were changes. I said at the time that this is going to be gut wrenching for a lot of members in this House. I said it. I said there are going to be a lot of communities that are going to be divided. There are going to be a lot of people who are going to be against each other because of these boundary changes.

I said it then, Mr. Speaker, and I will say again it. Somewhere along the line we have to try to resolve and heal a lot of these issues in the towns and communities. We are the leaders. I said it then, I will say it again now. I know there are people in this House who are directly affected. I know that. Somewhere along the line we have to try to bring the Province back together in some of the communities that are affected. I just implore on people, all of us, once this calms down, once the water gets back to normal, that we try to calm people down and calm communities and towns, and realize that yes, we will do the best we can in our abilities to represent the people.

Mr. Speaker, in the Bay of Islands itself – and I am going back. I will use the Bay of Islands. In the Bay of Islands there were recommendations to change. I said at the beginning of my presentation – I made a presentation. I said at the beginning, my presentation has nothing to do with Bay St. George or other parts of Corner Brook, other parts of Pasadena, other parts of Humber West. It has nothing to do with it. It was concerning the viewpoints that I received from the District of Bay of Islands.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knew I was going to make a presentation. Everybody in the Province who wanted to know, I made no secrets about it. The second day, I put in I was going to make a presentation. Also, well before the presentation, I served around copies of my presentation into any municipality in Corner Brook on the West Coast that wanted. It was available. I gave it to many people. Many people were informed that I was going to make a presentation on this on behalf of the people of the Bay of Islands.

In this House, when we got back a few people criticized me. Not many. Most understood what I was going to do. I have to point out two people who were very critical of me making a presentation. One was Tony Adey, the NDP candidate in the Bay of Islands who ran the last time. He was very critical of me making a presentation.

I just asked Tony Adey: Would you stand up for the people of the Bay of Islands, or would you stand and go on your Twitter box and criticize people like me who stand up for people in the Bay of Islands?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: You had your opportunity to stand with me for the District of Bay of Islands, Mr. Speaker, and what did he do? He criticized me for standing up and representing the people. It is terrible.

The other person, Mr. Speaker, is the vice-president of the PC association in the Bay of Islands. He criticized me and told me he would like to see it separated. The Member for Humber West, we sat down and discussed this and we said, well if it gets divided, one part of Corner Brook goes with the Bay of Islands, if it is Humber Heights, we are all fine with it, as long as we are all together somehow.

Mr. Speaker, politicians in this room, there are one or two who gave a few snipes, but the majority of people out around Corner Brook – and I give the Member for Humber West credit. The Member for Humber West said, no, let's do what is best for the people, however it turns out.

MR. KING: I did not snipe you.

MR. JOYCE: No, you never. No, the Member for Grand Bank never sniped me either. I have to say, he never.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the people out there, when you have concerns brought forth by the people you represent, should you not put them forth in the proper manner? Should you not? Of course you should.

Mr. Speaker, the good thing about it is that the presentation that I made with the support of

many councils in the Bay of Islands, if not all, because some put in written submissions – of the fire departments in the Bay of Islands. If you had not known how many people who call my office supported me and asked me to make the presentation, I can go through the presentation about how the Bay of Islands itself has always been together, three fish plants together, and a number of other reasons why I thought they should have stayed together.

Mr. Speaker, do I apologize for that?

Absolutely not. I, as a Member for the District of Bay of Islands, made the best presentation that I could on their behalf, expressing their views. The Commission agreed and said, yes, you made a reasonable argument for that. That is no slight on other people in Corner Brook. That is no slight on Pasadena or Humber Village, absolutely not. It is the people I represented in the Bay of Islands.

Mr. Speaker, Tony Adey again – I do not mean to bring him up, but he was the most vocal one. I saw something on Twitter, Tony Adey did – the NDP candidate in Bay of Islands. I saw something on Twitter. Do you know what he was upset about? Do you know what he thinks may have influenced the Commission? I was doing up a brochure, and we all do. All members in this House send out brochures to their municipalities. We all do.

I sent out a brochure explaining and giving information to people, the numbers. If you want to make a presentation, if you want to make a call, I gave the numbers. He actually criticized me for that. He said that may have influenced the Commission. Instead of standing up and saying, well, at least Eddie Joyce went out and informed the people of the District of Bay of Islands. At least he informed the people of the District of Islands. He criticized me for sending all the information out. At no time did I say you must make a presentation, you should. I said, here is the information. I got criticized for telling people about these boundary changes – which I voted for.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Humber West – I hope you do not mind me pointing out your name – we sat down and discussed this. Guess what? We both agreed that, yes, we should. If I want to make a presentation taking a part of

Humber West, or a part of the Humber Heights, it is whatever the Commission decides. Both are going to be represented well.

If the Member for Humber West keeps the Upper Country Road, it is going to be represented well. If Humber Heights had to stay with the Member for Humber East, it is going to be represented well. There was never any dispute about that. There was never any argument whatsoever among us.

Who are doing the sniping? It is the NDP who did not have the intestinal fortitude – Tony Adey and the vice-president of the PC association who went out and wanted it changed. It is going to be interesting in the next election just to see how much they are going to stand up – see if they are going to put in the brochure that I objected to having to keep the Bay of Islands together.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of fire chiefs, I have to – and I know all of them on the North Shore signed the letter sent in. I just want to thank Colin Tucker, Wayne Payne, Cecil, Rick, and a few more, because they know how much the Bay of Islands, how much training they do together. They know how much service agreement they have amongst themselves. On the South Shore they work together so much, and having one MHA to speak for the whole group, it does make a difference. When you have three fish plants, it is much easier to have one voice for all of the fish plants in the Bay of Islands than having one voice for two, another voice for another, and being separated. Those were the arguments that I was making.

Mr. Speaker, it was not as I presented to the Commission; the changes were different. The changes that the member up Country Road area, the Member for Humber West, in his area, that is what I recommended. I recommended that because the elementary school those parents go to are J.J. Curling. That is what I recommended.

The Mayor of Corner Brook made a presentation – and both of us agreed on this, Mr. Speaker, myself and the Mayor of Corner Brook agreed. He made a presentation that there should be one area of Corner Brook, just one area of Corner Brook, and that one area of Corner Brook should encompass the mill, the water supply, and any major infrastructure in the City of Corner Brook,

for example, the industrial park, that area. That should be in one boundary of the City of Corner Brook and have one member. That is why the Commission at the time said okay, we understand the concerns the Member of Bay of Islands put forward, we understand the concerns of the Mayor of the City of Corner Brook, so how can we incorporate all of those concerns, and they did.

What they did, they made one seat which took in the mill, which took in the water supply, which took in the industrial park and that area. Now the North and South Shore of the Bay of Islands are still together, and I am very proud of that. They took in the Humber Heights area. So now to the people of Humber Heights, which I have a lot of friends and family in that area, coming November I will be knocking on your doors – well before then, of course – explaining that the boundaries, if there are any questions about it, and I will be representing the Humber – and I am very proud to. I am very proud. I have played many sports up there. I have a lot of good friends, a lot of family up in that area, and I look forward to representing the people of Humber Heights with the Bay of Islands with the same vigor as I always did for the people in the Bay of Islands.

I even made a joke, Mr. Speaker. In the Humber Heights area, there is a team called the Humber Hawks and we were rivals in soccer. A lot of those guys are my friends. I had to go up and I bumped into a few of them and I told them that I will be representing the people in Humber Heights now. I said I will be such a nice guy to the soccer players of Humber Heights, the Hawks that we played against and fought against for so many years – I am such a nice guy I am going to show them all the trophies that we beat them for, so they could see the trophies.

They all had a good chuckle at that because a lot have moved on to be teachers, a lot of them moved on to be working in Corner Brook. I had a lot of dealings with a lot of those foes over a number of years, Mr. Speaker; foes on the field, but good friends off the field. That is the way that we all should work in the political game also. I must say we all do.

Myself and the Member for Humber West had a great night out in Cox's Cove delivering the fire

truck on behalf of the government. Once we get outside this theatre – we debate – once we are outside, we all work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Also, the only thing that was missing Friday night from the fire truck in Cox's Cove was the Member for Gander who was instrumental in helping us get the truck. The Member for Gander was praised by the fire chief and the council and by the Member for Humber West and myself. We had a great night. It was great.

That is how we work, Mr. Speaker. We all work together. We all have a difference of opinion, but when it comes down to it we work well together. That is the way we did it on this realignment also. I even spoke to the Member for Humber West about what I was proposing.

Mr. Speaker, this is very sensitive to a lot of people on our side. Our caucus and our leader decided that we are going to have a free vote. There is absolutely nothing wrong with having a free vote because this is not a money bill. This is not going to drag down the government with people offering a difference of opinion.

I am proud of our leader going to our caucus saying: What should we do? Our caucus said: You have to speak on how the towns in your district feel. That is what you have to do. I applaud that because I know when I made the presentation back three months ago, I spoke on behalf of the people who I represented at the time, the people of the Bay of Islands. I am so proud that we are going to have a free vote in this House of Assembly, so anybody who wants to express their views on behalf of the people who elected them, can stand in this House of Assembly, express their views openly and express their views with the full confidence of their caucus.

MR. MITCHELMORE: The Liberal caucus.

MR. JOYCE: The Liberal caucus. The Member for The Straits – White Bay North said yes, the Liberal caucus. That is right. That is good leadership, but that just shows how we, as a Liberal caucus, understand the sensitivity of this issue. We understand how towns are pulled apart. We understand how people are pulled apart. We understand how districts are pulled apart. We understand that.

This will heal, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you this will heal. I know any member who is elected to this House of Assembly, either from the government side or from this side, will do the best job they possibly can to represent their new districts. I have absolutely no doubt. We may differ on how to do it. We may differ on policies, but I feel confident that every member is here for the right reason.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is getting short. I have less than a minute to go. Before I close I just want to say a big thank you to the people of the Bay of Islands for supporting me in this cause. I first got elected in 1989. I always lived in the district, except for university. I always lived in the district. I was born and raised in the district. When there are times when an issue like this comes up, they surround you.

I just want to thank all the communities on the North and South Shore. I had calls from Lark Harbour, York Harbour, Humber Arm South, Mount Moriah, Curling, all throughout the North Shore from all the fire departments saying we should keep the Bay of Islands together, what can you do? We together, collectively – and I have to thank Judy Bolt. Judy works in my office in Corner Brook. She is the CA. I thank Judy for all the hard work that she did also.

In closing, thank you to the people of Bay of Islands for supporting me on this.

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: The people from Humber Heights, I look forward to representing you. Mr. Speaker, to everybody, this will pass, let's try to unite.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly always a privilege, a delight, and an honour to get up in this House of Assembly to represent the people of Baie Verte – Springdale district, and, in fact, the entire Province. A lot of important people graced the halls of this place over the years. I feel humbled every time I come in here and a privilege to come in this House of Assembly and stand and speak on behalf of the people. It has a lot of historical significance over the years.

It is always a surreal experience. Even seven years now I feel always humbled every time I come in here. It is a privilege to do so. Like every other member in this House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we always like to take every opportunity, every chance we get to stand up on our feet and debate the issues of the day.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on Bill 13, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Act. The Explanatory Notes here have five highlights. It is sixty-one pages long so I am not going to read sixty-one pages today, just briefly the five bullets in bullet form.

Number one, this bill would reduce the number of Members of the House of Assembly to forty; number two, it would effect a reorganization of the boundaries of electoral districts in the Province; number three, it would set a date when a general election shall be held in 2015 as a result of an overlap with the federal election; number four, it would establish a mechanism to resolve future overlaps between federal and provincial elections; and number five, it would provide for an exception to the requirement to hold a by-election where a seat in the House of Assembly becomes vacant six months or less before the day a general election is required to be held.

Mr. Speaker, before I start, I would certainly like to applaud and commend the Commission members for their outstanding, stellar work that they have done: the Chairperson, the hon. Robert Stack; Deputy Chair, Shawn Skinner; we have Bernard Coffey, Bill Matthews, and Allan Goulding. I think, in my opinion, in 120 days – that was their time frame. I think they did stellar work. They used all the modern technology – and thanks to the modern technology for getting

it on time. I think the Commission and all of their staff, the technical people involved, did an outstanding job to get this on time so we can debate this in the House of Assembly today. So a shout out to the Commission members, Mr. Speaker.

Again, like I said, this act will reduce the seats from forty-eight to forty-one member districts, it will establish new boundaries, and also give new names where applicable. Some names remain the same, Mr. Speaker, as you know. One interesting overarching or overriding premise, I suppose, upon which this act or the Commission stands on is that "... the vote of every elector in the Province shall have a weight equal to that of every other elector."

I suppose my interpretation of that is if I was living in Tilt Cove, for example, and somebody else living in Mount Pearl or St. John's, my vote in Tilt Cove would have equal value, equal power. It would not be diluted. So the Commission would take steps where my vote in Tilt Cove would not be diluted, that every vote would have equal value in this Province based on fair representation. I think that was the overriding arch, overriding premise upon which the Commission members made their recommendations so that every vote is very, very important and of equal value, Mr. Speaker.

That is nothing new. The electoral boundaries review, as we all know, is nothing new. It would happen every ten years. The last time there was a boundary commission review I believe it was in 2006, at that particular time. We went one year earlier. That is okay, Mr. Speaker. It gives us a chance to do it one year earlier. I would like to applaud all the former members of the district who served the district over the years, in the new one that I will have which I will mention shortly.

I checked in the hallway out here, I looked at all the pictures and the names of all the districts and my district, in particular, over the years, Mr. Speaker. I discovered that there are all kinds of names out there. In my district we had: Fred Rowe, Bill Smallwood, Ed Roberts, Bill Rowe, Brian Peckford, Tom Rideout, Harold Small, Alvin Hewlett, Paul Shelley, Graham Flight, and the present one in Green Bay South is the member here today.

All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that they laid the foundation, I am building upon the foundation that these hon. gentlemen did over the years. They did some outstanding work. If you go back 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, you will find that these MHAs, it does not matter if they were Liberal, NDP, or PC, it looks like it was – I do not think we ever had an NDP, but we had Liberal and PC. Over the years, they did stupendous jobs in representing the people in this district or this area of the Province.

I just want to say a big shout out to all these gentleman who have served the people over the years. It is a privilege just to build on what they have learned. We were taught over the years, Mr. Speaker, you just build upon someone else's work. You do not reinvent the wheel; you do not take all the credit for what you have done. Somebody else before you laid a solid foundation and you build upon that and you keep it going. Hopefully, you will make a difference in the days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, just to zero in on my district for example, my present name of my district is Baie Verte – Springdale. The new name is going to be Baie Verte – Green Bay. The Commission based that name upon – there is some significance or historical significance. For example, the name Baie Verte was used since 1975 in naming parts of my district up to the present day.

Mr. Speaker, Green Bay has been used since 1928 up to 1996. As you can understand, when the Commission members looked at this particular portion of the Province, this particular region, they wondered what kind of name would be best suited to represent the people of this area. Needless to say – I guess it was right in front of their face – they used the name Baie Verte – Green Bay because of their historical significance.

Over the years, we know that the district was called Baie Verte, then it was Green Bay over the years, then it was White Bay North, White Bay South, it was Grand Falls-Windsor – Springdale district one time, then it was Baie Verte – Springdale district. So over the years this particular portion of the Province had a lot of different names, varied names over the years, Mr. Speaker. If this goes through, if this passes,

and most likely it will, the new name of the district, upon which I am hoping to represent, would be Baie Verte – Green Bay. There is nothing wrong with that name. That is a nice name.

You might ask: What would be the impact on my district? Well, we have a new name of course. Then prior to this boundary commission I had around thirty-four communities that I would manage and look after. Now with the change, I would have approximately forty communities. I would go from approximately 11,000 people to approximately 13,773.

So what I am trying to say is we will have the communities from Green Bay South. I did not lose any. I picked up and I am very, very pleased, very, very happy to say that I have kept the Baie Verte Peninsula. I have kept the Springdale area, Green Bay North, and now they have added on Green Bay South. I am very pleased that the boundary Commissioners saw fit to say that because that is a natural fit.

On behalf of the people of Baie Verte, the Baie Verte Peninsula, on behalf of the people in Springdale, I welcome the Green Bay communities on board in this new district, should we get a majority vote in this House of Assembly. It is just a natural fit because I have gone around the region over the last little while and I have had people say it is just a natural fit. Not only geographically speaking, but it is also based upon culture, based upon history, based upon people's shopping patterns or travel patterns. People shop in Springdale. We go down to Robert's Arm, Triton, or Brighton for a drive. We do some shopping down there. So it is just a natural flow of traffic, Mr. Speaker. Doctors' appointments – people from Green Bay South will either go to Grand Falls for doctors' appointments or they would come in Springdale for doctors' appointments, or for social events.

Of course, sports and athletic events over the year, our schools and schools in Green Bay South, we have competed over the years back and forth, teachers engaged in social activities, teachers and students engaged in athletic events. I have been there over thirty years in that area, and I applaud the commissioners for their insight in recognizing the significance of historical patterns, travelling patterns, business patterns,

social patterns, educational patterns. It just flows together, Mr. Speaker.

Even before the changes, I have had people over the years say we should be involved in this because they have more commonalities. They have a lot in common. I am truly, truly humbled, and would truly be very pleased and grateful should I win the PC nomination and go on to win in a general election. I certainly would be pleased to represent that particular area. I would be honoured and thrilled.

Again, I would like to reiterate the fact that – or honour all our former members, but the present member here today, he said publicly he is about to retire, so I am not giving away any secrets, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say in this hon. House publicly that I would like to thank him for all of his help over the years. Yes, give him a hand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: I was Mayor of Springdale for four or five years and served on council for seven years. The present member was very accessible. He helped us out whenever he could. I just want to applaud him and commend him for his work in our district, and district issues. I hate to see him go, but on behalf of all the people I would like to say a great big thank you. Now, if he did not go, Mr. Speaker, him and I will be vying for the – we will be fighting for the position, I would think.

I would like to address one issue that I heard all along, right across the Province, is representation. This change will not dilute representation a great deal, Mr. Speaker. With this change, Newfoundland and Labrador still will be ranked very, very high nationally. If I am not mistaken, the average representation number is about 17,000 per district.

What we try to do is 13,500, to get that quotient, which is the average residents per district; but, of course, it is practically impossible to get every district at 13,500. That is the quotient the Commission was mandated to do. So there is some deviation, 10 per cent plus, or negative 10 per cent, whatever. It is practically impossible to divide the Province up to 13,550 every single

one. It is impossible to do, and they recognize that, Mr. Speaker.

These changes, I do not think I have any problem. In fact, I know I do not have any problem when it comes to fair representation because the district that I will then have, my new district, Baie Verte – Green Bay will only have close to about 14,000, about forty communities to look after. I admit, Mr. Speaker – and you have heard the resident from Brighton, Mr. Bartlett, talk about this, how we manage that.

Well, I go back and say that everybody in this House, our values, our culture and our heritage, we were taught hard work. We were raised that – if I look around this House here, I see all hard work among every MHA here. So it is not like representation is going to be diluted. The representation will be fair, and each MHA will have to manage their time.

With hard work, we will get around and deal with the issues at hand. Yes, we will have more communities. I will have more councils to deal with, but that is life, Mr. Speaker. We are not afraid of hard work. It is just a matter of managing your time. Every single day you will hear: here, here. At the end of the day, you will get to everybody in your district.

So we still have good, fair representation, nationally speaking. I believe, if I am not mistaken, I think we are probably ranked third or fourth in the country. We are still ranked high when it comes to representation. It is a valid argument, Mr. Speaker. I am not up here saying that the people should not be represented. That is the number one priority for everybody here in this House of Assembly, to make sure the people we serve are well represented.

I have had relationships in this House with MHAs here and I can see their hard work. I have no qualms in saying that the MHAs who represent those districts, the changes, they will have no qualms in representing the people they serve. I know how hard they work. It is based upon the value of hard work. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we were all raised, if you did not work, you should not eat. I mean that is a little bit harsh, but the bottom line is a strong work ethic will yield good results along the way.

I just want to reiterate that point and welcome my communities, Green Bay South communities into the new District of Baie Verte – Green Bay. Mr. Speaker, what a thrill it is to see us all combined, because geographically speaking, culturally speaking, and based upon all the commonalities we do have, I think it is a natural fit. I commend the commissioners for their outstanding work. I have to say again, when I look on that wall and see the outstanding people who served this House and these people district wise and Province, Mr. Speaker, it is so humbling and it is a thrill to be here.

Just for the record, before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, I would like to name the communities that will be involved in the new District of Baie Verte – Green Bay. Here they are, and I hope I have time to do this. This district includes the communities of: Baie Verte, Beachside, Brent's Cove, Brighton, Burlington, Coachman's Cove, Fleur de Lys, King's Point, La Scie, Little Bay, Little Bay Islands, Lushes Bight – Beaumont-Beaumont North, Middle Arm, Miles Cove, Ming's Bight, Nippers Harbour, Pacquet, Pilley's Island, Port Anson, Robert's Arm, Seal Cove, South Brook, Springdale, Tilt Cove, Triton, Westport, Woodstock, Harbour Round, Purbeck's Cove, Wild Cove, Sheppardville, St. Patrick's, Round Harbour, Shoe Cove, Smith's Harbour, Snooks Arm, Harry's Harbour, Jackson's Cove – Langdon's Cove-Silverdale, and Rattling Brook. I hope I said Lushes Bight – Beaumont-Beaumont North.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I left any communities out, but I do not think I did. The population is 13,773, and the land mass would be approximately 5,600 square kilometres, and the quotient deviation is 1.6 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, what a thrill it is to represent the people of the district, and like most MHAs, I should say all MHAs here, this is a tremendous job. I love it. I have the energy, the fire, and the passion to serve this district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to have the opportunity to stand today and speak to Bill 13.

It certainly does have a déjà vu feeling to it, of course, because of the fact that in January we discussed Bill 42, which was the bill that is making this bill exist. The bill we are discussing, Bill 13, has the changes in it that relate to the study that was done by the Boundaries Commission that Bill 42 set up.

I have to say that it is very disturbing to stand here again today and have to speak to that whole process, what was wrong with that process, and the undemocratic nature of the process of Bill 42, which was put together by the government, manipulating the system for their own ends, and that becomes very disturbing. There was absolutely no need to put the Boundaries Commission that should have been put in place in 2016 – according to our legislation – there was absolutely no need to put the boundaries commission that should have been put in place in 2016 – according to our legislation – there was absolutely no need for that to be put in place in 2015. No need whatsoever. The government had its own agenda. The government put the Commission in place to meet its own agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to commend the Commission itself because the Commission worked under tremendous pressure. The Commission was told they had to cut seats. They were told the number of seats they had to cut. They were told when and where they were allowed to – well, the where of when they were allowed to hold public hearings. They were given so many directions by the government under Bill 42, and agreed to by the Official Opposition, that they were constrained. Yet, they took it upon themselves, they were appointed and they did the work, but they obviously understood, in doing the work – they did not criticize the legislation they were working under, and rightly so, that shows the integrity of the people who were on the Commission, but their recommendations are telling, Mr. Speaker.

They have four recommendations at the end of their report that have not really been talked

about by government and most people of course are focusing on the recommendations with regard to the changes to the boundary, what the forty districts look like, but we cannot forget what they have in their recommendations. What they have in their recommendations are telling.

One of the recommendations is that you should not set up a commission with only 120 days to do the work that they did, especially when it included boundary changes. Now that was one thing. That said a lot, Mr. Speaker. They were telling the government: Even though we worked hard, we killed ourselves, staff worked morning, noon, and night and weekends. We did all that. We got the work down, but it was not the right way.

They also say in their recommendations that the decision on when and where to have hearings should be the decision of the Commission. They should not be bound by decisions that government passes on to them when another commission is set up.

That in itself is also very telling. They, for example, – and they point this out. It is in the Commission's report. They say it themselves. Even though they were told that the four seats in Labrador were to remain, they still had to hold a hearing in Labrador because they were told they had to do it. Now, that did not make any sense, not in this case because there were going to be no changes to Labrador. Now, they say that themselves, so they had no choice over that.

Their recommendation is that the decision on hearings should be left up to the commission that is put in place. That is in the recommendations. We seem to forget they have recommendations in there. They just did not do the work of putting the forty boundaries in place and doing the changes that had to be made. They made other recommendations.

They also talk about why – they do not put it this way but it is really what they are saying – the boundaries commission should be when it is. It has to be related to when censuses are taken. So they believe that the figures that they used, because of when they were doing the Commission's report – that the figures they are using are figures that are not the most up-to-date figures in creating the new districts.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminding the government and I am reminding the people that the Commission worked under tremendous constraint. I congratulate them for the work that they did. I also say to government and to the Official Opposition, look at their recommendations. What they are saying is do not do it again the way you did it. I think that is very important.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to move on and remind people of what it is that we are dealing with and why we are here. There were many things that were in Bill 42 that we are now seeing the result of in Bill 13, things that people forget about.

The process itself was an undemocratic process. The government laying on the legislation, government and Official Opposition together agreeing to it, but going against our legislation, going against what is there which gives directions for when electoral boundaries should take place limiting – because of the limited time, limiting the voice of people, limiting how many people could get involved in saying what they are thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I have had many people speak to me since the Commission's report came out – and we are basically voting on the report here in this House as we discuss Bill 13. I have had many people, some of whom are mayors in towns out around the Province, who are not happy with the process, who are not happy with the fact that rural representation is being cut, that fewer rural MHAs will sit in this House of Assembly.

They are very concerned that at this time of uncertainty, at this time of fiscal restraint, at this time when people are really feeling unsure about where we are going to be going in economic terms in this Province, what really is the overall future when you look at the nature of resource development with what is happening in the mining industry, with what is happening in the oil industry. It is rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are the ones being badly affected by that, that at this point in time, the representation of the rural voice is going to be lessened.

Mr. Speaker, this is what people out around are concerned about. This is what some mayors have spoken to me about. They are not happy with what has happened. They are not happy with the cutting of seven seats in rural Newfoundland, not at all. That is why, just as we could not as a party and as a caucus – we could not vote for Bill 42, we will not be able to vote for Bill 13 either. It is based on everything that was wrong about Bill 42.

Let's look at what is happening with regard to that voice I am talking about. I had a good example of that, Mr. Speaker, this past week when, I, along with my colleagues, MHAs for Labrador attended the Combined Councils of Labrador. The Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs was there. The Member for Torngat Mountains and the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair was there.

We heard once again all the problems that exist for people in Labrador, the delivery of services, their transportation system, the infrastructure, and all the problems that exist. I could only say it was good that when the bill first came out – when Bill 42 first came out from that government, Mr. Speaker. When it first came out with the possibility of the loss of seats in Labrador, I saw that immediately and spoke to it immediately.

I cannot say the same thing happened with the Official Opposition. Their leader first accepted it. I would say that the representatives from Labrador in his caucus had a lot to say that weekend so that he came back on a Monday and all of a sudden he saw the light. Rightly so, because it would have been terrible if the voice of Labradorians had been lessened. It is also terrible –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – that the voice of rural Newfoundlanders has been lessened. This really disturbs me. This is something this government has not thought about. It is shocking and it is shameful. It is shocking and shameful.

Mr. Speaker, let's go on. What else do we need to remember? It is easy to forget. I want to

remind people what else do people forget about? We forget about that we sat here through a filibuster, we sat overnight, and we had – every single person in the House got up and spoke on the government side. Every single backbencher got up and used every second of his twenty minutes, or her twenty minutes – although they do not have many hers over on that side of the House now, unfortunately. Every single MHA of the Official Opposition got up and used every one of their twenty minutes. They used the time while backroom deals were being done by the government and the Official Opposition together.

Mr. Speaker, they want us to forget that happened. That was undemocratic. To have this bill brought into us without any warning, to force that debate in January was one of the most undemocratic things I have been through in this House of Assembly. Then to have the writing of that important bill taking place out in the hallways of the House of Assembly, talk about an undemocratic process and how this House does not operate in a functional way. We had a brilliant example of it in January of this year with Bill 42.

Mr. Speaker, is there anything in Bill 13 that we agree with? Believe it or not, there is. The Official Opposition may not like this, but we do agree with the proposal for the date of our general election to be November 30.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: We do agree with that. We agree with it because right from the very beginning, all year we were saying how can you have a provincial and federal election going on at the same time. Saskatchewan recognized that long ago because Saskatchewan has a fixed election that takes place in the same years that the federal one does, and ours do, but the Saskatchewan legislation allows for that date to be different if there is a clash between a federal and provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, that change, that piece of Bill 13 we agree with; number one, that the general election should be on November 30 this year, and number two, that any other time that there is the potential for a clash between a provincial and a federal election campaign, that we make

the change of having the election provincially at the end of November. That we agree with.

In 2016 – well, we will not have a Commission in 2016. We were supposed to have the Commission in 2016. It now will be 2026, the next one; so instead of ten years in between two Commissions, there will be eleven in between this one.

It is very disturbing that the government, as I said earlier, manipulated legislation, manipulated everything around our electoral boundaries commission in this year to try to shore up their own fortunes, to try to change things enough so they can try to get re-elected in this House of Assembly. That is what we are dealing with.

There are two other things I want to get at, Mr. Speaker. I would like this government to explain – when they get to the end of the debate they will be standing on their feet. I would like them to explain to the people of rural Newfoundland because they have not done it adequately – they have not done it at all, really. They may have used smokescreens. They have used smokescreens. Everything they have done has been a smokescreen.

In a year when we are dealing with such a deficit that we are dealing with, in a year when we are going to be asked later on this week – because we have now seen the bill – we are going to be asked to approve a \$2 billion loan in a year like that, they caused this whole smokescreen of the changes to the boundary and setting up the Commission and having this bill here in the House today to get people away from realizing and thinking about and talking about the mess they have put us in financially. That is the thing, Mr. Speaker. They put us in a mess. They have created the mess. They did this as a smokescreen to try to undo that.

We have to wait until November 11, I absolutely agree with it, but they are also hoping that if they wait long enough people are going to forget. People are not going to forget, Mr. Speaker. People are not going to forget what this government has done. People are not going to forget the mess they have put us in. They are not going to forget the fact that this government has lessened the voice of rural Newfoundlanders

here in this House of Assembly. That is not going to be forgotten by them. I will not have to remind them. They are going to remember. They will remember when they go to the ballot box. They will remember who is really there for them.

Mr. Speaker, one more point I would like to make. I would like this government, before this week is out, will they be able to tell us how much the Commission cost this year? It cost more than one would normally cost because of what they had to do to get their report in. When you read the two or three sentences in the report, they talk about all the overtime that was done. Mr. Speaker, you had staff who worked overtime. It is in the report. They worked morning, noon, and night. They worked on weekends. I would like to know what the cost of this is going to be.

It cost over a million dollars to undo Bill 29. I am wondering how much it cost to do what they did enforcing the Commission this year – enforcing a Commission to happen in too short a period of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Enforcing a Commission to have to work morning, noon, and night. So once again if they want something done for their own political gain, they do not care how much it costs. They will make it happen. They do not care if it is another million or another \$2 million, it does not matter.

It is a different story when it comes to talking about services to the people. All of a sudden it is cut, cut, cut. When they want to make something happen for their own ends, Mr. Speaker, it is spend, spend, and spend. Forget the money. Do not admit that you have made a mistake like with Bill 29 and bringing in a new bill to put back in place everything that they took out, plus to improve our access to privacy as we had recommended.

Bill 29, Mr. Speaker – they will never apologize for Bill 29. You can bet your bottom dollar they will never apologize for Bill 42. They never will.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to be consistent. Nothing about Bill 42 could we agree with. Unfortunately, the date of the election is in Bill 13. Well that is okay, we will vote against Bill 13. The election will be November 30 anyway. We are being consistent and standing here for a democratic process, for a process that should have helped the people of the Province, not hurt the people of the Province.

Even their own Member for Baie Verte – Springdale admitted when he stood up a few minutes ago that things are going to be harder for him, things are going to be harder for other MHAs. So it is going to be harder for people in rural Newfoundland on two levels. It is going to be harder for the people to try to get their voice heard, and it is going to be harder for MHAs as well. He said it himself, Mr. Speaker. It is not going to be harder for me here in St. John's. No, it will not be, if people re-elect me. It is going to be harder for any of us in rural Newfoundland. Their own members have said it.

Are they going to have a free vote, Mr. Speaker? Apparently the Official Opposition does not have much agreement so they are having a free vote. Is the government side going to have a free vote over this one? Are they going to let their own people vote and say how they really feel about what has happened? That is what is going to be telling. So are you going to have free vote all around here? I know where we stand as three people. We are not afraid of it. We always have been in agreement on it, but obviously we have division, both on the government side and the Official Opposition side.

So having said that, I think I have made all the points, Mr. Speaker, that are important to me.

I thank you very much for the opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 13.

I certainly wanted to, like the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, talk about the changes in my own district and the additions, but when you listen sometimes to the foolishness that comes from the mouths of other people who do not understand what they are talking about and do not understand rural Newfoundland, I suppose the Member for Signal Hill-Quidi Vidi spent some time in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I am almost sure she has.

I am sure she means well in some of the things she says, but it is better to get the facts straight, and that way then everybody can make a decision. Number one, if we waited until next year to do this, Mr. Speaker, we would not be able to change the boundaries until the next election, which would be another four years down the road, which would be 2020. So we would not be able to change the Assembly Act. We would not be able to do that to the Legislature, as our Premier wanted to do because it was requested by lots of people in this Province to do that.

Also, we are able to have the support of the Opposition. Of course, the leader, in the beginning when it came out took credit for it and said it was his idea anyway. So I guess we have a unanimous decision here on the boundary changes.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I find it rather insulting when a member can get up from another party, especially from Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, and say there are no females over here on this side, when one of the hardest working members for this government and this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is the Member for Fortune Bay Cape – La Hune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: We also have another member, who happens to be off sick, Mr. Speaker, and has worked very hard for this government and this Province and her district –

MS MICHAEL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, on a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do not mind being quoted, but I would remind the speaker that if somebody is going to quote me, quote me correctly. I said I wish they had more over there, not that they did not have –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

MR. FORSEY: Even when a member of this side, anyway, is off sick and dedicated so much time to the people of this Province, who the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans, who has worked very hard in the departments she has been in, and then to get up and be insulted in that way and not here to defend herself, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a shame. I never heard such foolishness in my life.

It seems like we try to get up here in the House of Assembly, and all of us are here for a good reason, and we want to improve the way we do things in this Province. We want to do the right things for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am sure just about everyone who gets elected wants to do that, Mr. Speaker.

I have not seen any opposition to the bill from the Official Opposition in this particular case, which I think is great because I think we are all on the same page with this one. When it comes to a vote, there may be some changes. Apparently not everybody is probably in support of it, but just let me say, when you get down to these kinds of things and you start insulting members of government, or whether they are in government or not, but hard-working people, hard-working members for their district, I think it is time to give that stuff up and talk about the facts.

I actually stood up in the beginning to talk about the facts, Mr. Speaker, and that is where I want to go. The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi seems to know everything about rural Newfoundland. Well, I grew up in rural Newfoundland. I was born in rural Newfoundland, like a lot of us, most of us –

MR. S. COLLINS: Leading Tickles.

MR. FORSEY: Leading Tickles, yes, for the Member for Terra Nova.

Now, I am glad he mentioned that, Mr. Speaker, because when I grew up in Leading Tickles we were under the District of Lewisporte. We had no road, we had no communications, but challenging for the member for that district. I would say it was rather challenging. To be able to service that particular part of his district, I would say it was pretty difficult to do.

Today, everything is a lot closer. We all talk about such a small world. When I got elected I thought I had a big district, but today it is not so big anymore because of the communications we have, because of our transportation network.

Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do and the rest of the members in this House, we have Facebook, we have inbox messages, we have emails, we have phones, and we have fax. You name it, we have it. It is just amazing.

I was talking to someone the other day, and I said it is like my constituents are almost in my driveway. That is another thing. Mr. Speaker. We seem to forget the part about servicing your district when you are representing, when you are the member.

I am not going to say this disrespectful, but I am just going to state this as fact. For fifteen years prior to me getting elected in the District of Exploits, the member lived in St. John's – for fifteen years. We never had the communications that we have today; however, the member represented the district and got re-elected there numbers of times. For him to be able to represent that district, when he needed to get to the district, he had a four-and-a-half-hour drive. It all depends whether your member lives in the district or does not live in the district.

Somebody mentioned to me a while ago, well, you had a former Premier who lived in St. John's and represented a district on the West Coast. Absolutely, and I am not making up any excuses for him either. He had to do the same thing. So did they –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, I cannot even hear myself talk.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. FORSEY: I like hearing myself talk. They might not like to hear me talk. There you go.

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

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to say here is that it is much easier today to represent more communities and more people. Like the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale said, the national average per district is somewhere around 17,000, 17,500. We are not even close to that. We are averaging somewhere around 13,500, I think, I say to the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale. So we are not even close to that.

In some places in the country they have rural areas like we have and sure, it is a little bit more challenging. However, when we came to vote on Bill 42 and voting on Bill 13, I do believe in the process and I do believe that we are doing actually what people expect.

I spent a lot of time in my district since this came up. Since January, I have talked to the constituents. They were not sure how the districts were going to go. By the way, the first proposal that came out with regard to the district changes and the electoral boundary changes is not the same now on the final one as it was in the beginning. What the committee had done for the District of Exploits, they had put Buchans, Millertown, Badger, and that area in with Exploits. So in order for me to represent that particular portion of my district, I would have to basically go through, jump over another district to get there, which was Grand Falls-Windsor.

I must say that these communities and the councils and the mayors made presentations or submissions to the committee and very good presentations, I say, along with the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor. For the most part, the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, the mayor, the deputy mayor, were in support of the submissions by these communities. The Commission looked at that and realized they

were sort of dividing a district. They were actually separating a district with no boundary connection whatsoever. So they looked at that and they said: Yes, that is a good submission. I think we will give that some consideration.

Well, they did. I would have enjoyed representing Badger, Millertown, Buchans; however, they took the recommendations, they changed it and what we have now is the District of Exploits and we have Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans, which is what it was in the beginning before the changes started, Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans. The only thing was that Windsor was in Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, represented by a different member from Windsor, lived in Windsor. A hard-working Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, but what we have now is Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans. Part of Grand Falls is now in the Exploits district.

We also have Wooddale, Sandy Point, Norris Arm and Norris Arm North, along with a portion of Grand Falls-Windsor. For anybody who may happen to be listening, it is all of Grenfell Heights and when you get to the intersection of Scott Avenue and Hardy Avenue on Grenfell Heights, you turn left and go up towards Finn Avenue. When you get to Finn Avenue, you turn right and you take everything in on the right and I think I have something like twenty-seven streets altogether as part of Grand Falls-Windsor is now in the Exploits district.

There is something unique about this particular boundary change for the Exploits Valley. I will say the Exploits Valley. Mr. Speaker, we have always considered ourselves being in the Exploits Valley. Whether we were from Badger, whether we were from Grand Falls-Windsor, whether we were from Norris Arm, whether we were from Botwood or Leading Tickles or wherever, we were part of the Exploits Valley. We have the Exploits Valley. We have the Exploits River. We have the Bay of Exploits. So everything is related to and comes from Exploits.

I recall back when we had the so-called RED Boards, it was the Exploits Valley Economic Development Corporation. It represented everybody from Buchans down to Norris Arm, to Leading Tickles, and Botwood, Bishop's

Falls, and Grand Falls-Windsor. Everything in between was all part of the Exploits Valley Economic Development Corporation. So was the Exploits Valley Tourism Association. That included everything from Buchans again down to Norris Arm, to Leading Tickles, and everything in between.

What we have now is, even though at one time Green Bay South was part of Grand Falls-Windsor, Green Bay South is now in with Baie Verte – Springdale. What we have is very, very well defined. We will have two members representing the entire Exploits Valley, if you want to look at it that way, which I think is very unique. I think it is very nice.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, being one of the first committee members on the Exploits Valley Salmon Festival. The Exploits Valley Salmon Festival was actually born in Bishop's Falls in the District of Exploits and then it started to grow. I remember we had members from Grand Falls-Windsor on the committee and we had members from Bishop's Falls on the committee. It grew and grew to where it is today. It is really large today. What was it called? It was called the Exploits Valley Salmon Festival. That is what it was called. That is still the Exploits Valley. Everything is directed to the Exploits Valley.

Basically, what I have now are my original communities. I would like to do the same as the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale. If anyone is listening, it is nice to know where the boundaries are. In the original Exploits district there was: Leading Tickles, Glovers Harbour, Point Leamington, Pleasantview, Morris Cove, Cottrell's Cove, Fortune Harbour, Point of Bay, Phillips Head, Northern Arm, Botwood, Peterview, Bishop's Falls. Now we also have Norris Arm, Norris Arm North, Sandy Point, Wooddale, and part of Grand Falls-Windsor with so many streets.

I thought it rather funny because the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale has a lot more communities and he started naming them off. Someone had said happy New Year and I do not know if everybody can remember every year on NTV when they have old year out and the New Year in and all that stuff, it comes up all of these communities on the bottom of the screen. He

kept naming them off – it might have been the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I am not sure, I believe he thought it was happy New Year already. That was rather nice.

Also, we were talking about shared service and regional services. Mr. Speaker, in the Exploits Valley we have Grand Falls-Windsor, Bishop's Falls, Botwood, Peterview, and Northern Arm soon will be on the water supply. We have all of these communities in the Exploit's Valley who are on the same feeder system, the same water supply. It is not new to us in the Exploit's Valley. We were operating the same waste management sites and shared services and waste management long before the actual waste management system came in. We had animal control, we had committees, and everything was already there in place.

When they did the job on the signage back a few years ago, I know it came up here in the House sometime this week and I think there were some questions on it, but we have already done that. It is already done. It has been there for years. The signage is up, everybody knows what it is, and it identifies the heritage sites and the tourism sites in all the Exploit's Valley. We have been doing that. We have a lot in common. Every community in the Exploit's Valley has a lot in common.

Mr. Speaker, my time is just about up – it is couple of minutes – but I would just like to say while I am up here I, yes, probably got a little bit extra work. Why wouldn't you? You have extra communities, you have extra people, and that is the way it is. We do not mind that.

I say to anyone over there, especially the Third Party, when it comes to work, come on, we welcome it. We welcome it. I have been privileged to be able to work for the District of Exploits. I have been privileged. It is a privilege to actually – I remember, as the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, when I walked into this Chamber first, at the beginning, I was in awe, I did not know, I was shaking in probably 99 per cent of my body, because if I had to open my mouth probably my mouth would have been shaking as well, but that is what happens. It is a privilege to represent the people of any district, especially the District of Exploits.

I just want to thank them right now, publicly, because without them I would not be here. That is why I spend every moment I can representing them and their needs in whatever manner they need.

Now, I also look forward, and have a desire, to look after the people in the addition of the Exploits district, which is Wooddale – and by the way, Wooddale and Sandy Point in 2006 was in the District of Exploits. I had the opportunity to represent them for a year or so, and the new boundary changes were up in 2006. In the new election when they took effect in 2007, I had lost Sandy Point to the District of Lewisporte, and I had lost Wooddale to the District of Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South.

So what is happening now is – I am sure that the Member for Lewisporte, I probably have big boots to fill, because what I am picking up is from three different districts, but I welcome that. I do welcome that, because it is still all part of the Exploits Valley. I have always enjoyed being a part of it. I grew up there. I spent a lifetime there – whatever my lifetime is right now, it has been spent in the district. I live in the district, and whatever happens, I will continue to live in the district because it is a great place to live, the Exploits Valley, and the Exploits district is certainly the ideal spot for me.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what we are doing is fair, and I have enjoyed and had the privilege of representing the District of Exploits, and I will be supporting this bill.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, before I recognize the next speaker, in the vein of thinking it is never too late to right a wrong or to correct something, in the early part of the member's address he made a reference to foolishness, and at that point in time was trying to make the context to the member on the opposite side. Where the root of the word foolish is fool, I would think, although maybe in its totality it may not be unparliamentary, it is certainly provocative, I would like to ask the member to withdraw that reference.

MR. FORSEY: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand and say a few words on Bill 13, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Act. The history of the act, Mr. Speaker, has already been given here a couple of times today. We all remember – it does not seem like that long ago – in January when we were all surprised with the Premier calling us back into the House to debate Bill 42.

We know that the electoral boundaries review happens every ten years and the reason that we are here today and we are discussing Bill 13 is because we have had political interference in this process. This process would have happened next year anyway, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is very sad. When we are giving reasons that it is because of savings – I think savings, by reducing the eight or ten seats, is going to be \$2.5 million, Mr. Speaker. People see through that. It was a direct interference in the electoral boundaries process. It has created much havoc, Mr. Speaker, and we hear that everywhere we go.

Every day we talk about examples in this House of where millions and millions and millions of dollars is wasted and today my questions were around \$9 million the Department of AES, around a complete mismanagement and bungled RFPs totalling \$9 million. The other day we referenced \$13 million in EAS, so lots of examples of millions and millions and millions of dollars of wastage and now we see that we are interfering here with the electoral boundaries process, and that is the reason why we have a Bill 13 from debating Bill 42 in January.

I want to talk for a few minutes about the four seats in Labrador, and that will not be a surprise to anybody, Mr. Speaker. When we were called back into the House in January and the act was tabled at that time, the piece of legislation, I could not believe that section 15(6) part of the act was to be repealed.

I was not around for other electoral boundary review but I certainly spent my weekend here

digging into what I could and researching information, and I could not believe that the Premier and the government did not see the unique challenges that exist in Labrador. I am going to remind viewers of a couple today, Mr. Speaker. Did not see why four seats in Labrador had been protected for four decades. There is a reason why those four seats had been protected.

I feel that it is important for me to talk about that over the next few minutes because since we have debated Bill 42 in the House in January, I have been asked a number of times – you have probably been in places, Mr. Speaker, yourself where people have said why did you vote in the end to support the four seats in Labrador. When you thumb through the book, the Commission's report that came back – and I want to commend the Commission, Justice Stack and his team, for getting this extensive piece of legislation back into the House, meeting the timelines.

When you thumb through that and you look at the sizes of the districts – I am here in the House right now representing – and there have been many before me – the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. I have a land mass in that district of more than 26,500-plus square kilometres. There are other members in the House here and their district is fifteen square kilometres versus over 26,000 square kilometres.

I just heard the Member for Exploits talk about the progress we have made in social media and the progress we have made in transportation. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you, from the district that I represent right now – I spoke passionately about that in January, even for other member who will come after me, but most importantly for the people who live there. Back in the 1990s, we had two airlines in Southeast Labrador flying in and out. Five days a week we had air travel in that area in the 1990s, and we had a couple of chartered airlines. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have one that goes out every three days. So that will tell you the challenges.

Every weekend when I travel – I have quite a journey when I am getting back and forth to my district every weekend. It is only people who do that who can appreciate it. I will share a couple of things to put it into context. A couple of weeks ago I left St. John's, I flew to Blanc-

Sablon. Two hours on a flight and I could not land. I flew another hour to Goose Bay.

We talk about Muskrat Falls and the minimal impacts on the community, there was not a vehicle available to rent anywhere in Goose Bay. I was going to drive the 420 kilometres back to the coast because I had several events lined up. There was nothing available. I got back on the plane. I flew back to St. Anthony. I got off the plane. I hitched a ride with an airline agent and I overnighted in Flower's Cove. The next day I caught the ferry. After two full days of travelling, I got to the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

Mr. Speaker, people who get in their vehicle here in the parking lot and drive out to their district events to speak, they do not understand what somebody that far off the beaten path goes through every single weekend. As I said earlier, the shortest way I can get back and forth to the district every weekend is four hours on a plane and driving 600 kilometres. That is short; most times it is longer.

When you represent a district – the people in that area are the furthest from this Legislature, along the Coast of Labrador. If everybody is to be treated equal and everybody deserves equal representation, Mr. Speaker, to diminish the representation of those people would be very sad, and I believe it would be wrong.

The furthest from the Legislature, huge infrastructure needs. They rely heavily on their member to advocate for them, to put issues forward. In addition to that, it is those rural areas – and there are rural areas on the Island, some that have similar challenges, Mr. Speaker, but the federal services and the provincial services are very, very lacking in some of those areas. Then that heightens the reason why you have a heavier dependence on your member's office.

The people in my district, in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, do not have the opportunity to run down the road and go into an employment office. The seniors cannot go into an office and gain federal services. So a lot of times the member's office, whoever it might be in that district, is dealing with a lot of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, talk about the size of Labrador. It was said here before – and my colleague may be going to speak about it too, I do not know, but you can take all of the Atlantic Provinces and put in Labrador. So we do, we have lots and lots of challenges. That is the reason why we felt that the four seats needed to be protected.

I just spent the weekend in Goose Bay attending the Combined Councils of Labrador, Mr. Speaker. There are three Aboriginal groups in Labrador, so we have a vast land. We have a cultural diversity. There is certainly a great need to preserve what we already have and what has been around for four decades.

When you dig back into the presentations that were made in previous years, when other electoral boundary reviews were happening, there were lots of good arguments made, Mr. Speaker, on why some of the seats needed to be maintained the way they were. It was strongly felt that if you take a section of Labrador and you put it with a part of the Island, the little voice that is there now, that would be diminished even more. These people would certainly be disadvantaged.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that our leader, Dwight Ball – that my colleague and I for Torngat had the strong support of our leader and of this caucus. Everyone in this caucus – lots of urban MHAs. MHAs here from the Avalon, from St. John's and Mount Pearl, they understood. The Premier did not understand when he tabled this. There was no provision there. Section 15(6) of the act was going to be repealed, but I was very happy to have the full support of our leader and our caucus to protect the four seats in Labrador. I was happy, when we submitted the amendment, that it was approved here in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, right now while we have the protection for the seats in Labrador, I cannot help but think about especially the rural areas on the Island, because I have represented them. Because I was born and raised in a rural area, I have a special attachment to rural areas. I think we have a fantastic lifestyle. I think we are rich in many ways in rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, what this has done to colleagues, I believe, on both sides of the House – I followed

a little bit some of the hearings that were held and reading in the paper about the presentations that were put forward, and a lot of concern about areas of the Province that have existed nicely together.

You had zone boards that were in place representing an area. You had areas where, historically, they have always had things in common. They have shared festivals. They have had joint councils. Now we see that a lot of that is in upheaval. It is going to take some time for people to work through that and to adjust to this new normal. It is unfortunate – I have to say again – that it happened a year before it had to. This electoral boundary review was a direct result of political interference, political gain, and people see through that, and so it is going to take some time for all of that to happen.

I want to comment on a point that the Leader of the NDP made a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker. I took a little bit of offence when she said there is obviously dissent on this side, so there is going to be a free vote because everybody was not on the one page. Well, I want to say, make no mistake, that here in the Opposition we have a leader who does not believe in whipping people in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: That is not the democratic process. Mr. Speaker, we have a leader where we are free and we are welcome to give our opinions. When we sit around the caucus table, the variety of input is welcomed. I am happy to be a part of a caucus, I am happy to sit at a table every morning where our leader says: How do you feel about this, and how do you feel about this? If I have a colleague who feels I do not want to stand and support for reason (a), (b), and (c), I would be remiss if I did not say in this House of Assembly we come with a voice to speak for the people that we represent.

All of the MHAs here, when they go out in their districts, if they are hearing concerns from their people, they have an obligation to stand and bring those issues forward. So yes, Mr. Speaker, a free vote is welcomed here on this side. I am so thrilled that we have a leader that is okay with

that, that is not whipping the vote into how he wants this to be.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that protection; I will continue with my points for the few minutes that I have.

The Member for Exploits talked about there was a member that represented their district for years before that did not live in his district – picking on the former Premier, Roger Grimes. I know he was a fantastic Premier for the people in Labrador; we were delighted to have him.

I just noticed it was interesting that he did not talk about the years that Danny Williams lived in his district. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to get down in the weeds and talk about that –

MR. FORSEY: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits, on a point of order.

MR. FORSEY: I used two former Premiers, and the other one was Williams who represented the West Coast and I did not make any excuses for him either.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry; there is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue on. One of the points that I was making earlier about the rural areas and especially back to Labrador and some of the challenges – when the member talked about the

progress that we have made, he talked about not only the progress we have made in transportation and I have alluded to the many, many challenges that we still have in that area in transportation. I did not even talk about the bungled RFP process and the fact that we have an unreliable ferry service that we have been waiting for a long, long time to get a new ferry as a part of the new provincial ferry strategy, but it seems like we are going to be waiting an unforeseeable time for a while yet.

The other thing is he talked about social media, Mr. Speaker. It is important for people to understand that we are not there yet either. We cannot sit down in offices and hold meetings and depend on the social media for us to be able to use Skype and things like that. Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, we do not have the sufficient infrastructure for us to be able to use that. Many, many times I have stood and I have presented petitions on behalf of the region calling on the government to work with the feds and to work with the service provider and the provincial government to put the funds in that we need to bring us up to where we need to be in broadband.

We do not have the option to say a member who represents that area, a member who represents Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair can do some of that by social media. Mr. Speaker, no, we cannot. You can barely do more than send or receive an email. As I was sitting here – and I do not make it up – an hour ago one of the town councillors in my district messaged me and she said I cannot even get emails from you anymore, the Internet is so slow. To say yes, you can have less representation because there is social media and there are all kinds of options we can use, we are not there. We do not have the infrastructure yet, and it is important for people to understand that.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to have an election. We are going to have an election on November 30. We have a Premier whose mandate clearly was up until the end of September. I would have been happy for the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair to go to the polls in September, and I know they would have been happy to have an election at that time, Mr. Speaker, because guess what? I have three unconnected communities in my district. As of right now,

November 30 I have no idea how I am getting into three of them. I know one thing, we may not have an air service going into them. I know another thing, we are certainly not going to have the ferry running. So, unless you have a snow plane or something – again, this goes back to the challenges of rural parts, and the transportation challenges that exist that I am speaking to in my district.

We have small unconnected communities, Mr. Speaker. I can give you examples that ballot boxes did not even get into when a nomination was held, because there was no way to get them there. So, when we are going that late in the year, we are not only competing at the doors with the jolly guy, but some of these communities are going to be very, very difficult to get to, because I doubt anybody, with the caps that are put on the money you can spend in an election – and so it should be – you are not going to have the money to be chartering helicopters or anything like that.

So I do have communities that I do not know if any candidates will get to those communities at that time of year. Once again, it goes back to being very, very unfortunate that we have had this interference at this time with the electoral boundary review.

In clueing up, Mr. Speaker, I want to say I was thrilled that we have a leader who understands Labrador, who understands the vastness, who understands the transportation issues, who understands we have these diverse cultures with three Aboriginal groups. Our leader and the Opposition Office stood firmly to support that the four seats be protected in Labrador, and that those people deserve equal representation. They submitted the amendments, and the amendments were voted for. I was thrilled.

AN HON. MEMBER: Did the NDP (inaudible)?

MS DEMPSTER: No, the NDP did not submit any amendments, I say to my hon. colleague. They did not submit any amendments, Mr. Speaker, but I was thrilled with the outcome.

I am happy to have a couple of words to speak to this. I will continue to represent the people from the wonderful District of Cartwright – L'Anse

au Clair as long as I am in this capacity, a position that I take very seriously. I work hard for them every single day. We have lots of infrastructure issues, and we are making some progress. I will continue to do what I can to keep their issues front and center.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista North – South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is Bonavista South, no doubt.

MR. SPEAKER: I apologize.

MR. LITTLE: Today I am honoured to be able to rise in the House again and speak to this very important amendment, Mr. Speaker, an amendment that affects the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I listened to the previous speaker, and I must say on this side of the House there are two members from Labrador, the great land. They certainly represented the great land well in January.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I can safely say the two members on this side of the House stood up and they certainly supported the Big Land, the land that is very important to Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Also, I am delighted to be able to stand in this House and represent the great people of Bonavista South, the Bonavista Peninsula in particular. To be able to speak on a bill like this gives me great gratitude to speak at this time in the House of Assembly. I know there are a large number of members who are lined up to speak on this very important bill on the boundary changes.

First of all, I would like to say I commend the Commission, the Chairperson Mr. Robert Stack, the Deputy Chairperson Mr. Shawn Skinner, Mr.

Bernard Coffey, Mr. Allan Goulding, and Mr. Bill Matthews. I commend the Committee in relation to doing some outstanding work. On behalf of every member in the House of Assembly, we certainly appreciate the hard work. The time frames were met and so forth to bring this particular report back to the House of Assembly for us to have some debate and have some say on as well, Mr. Speaker.

In January, the Members of the House of Assembly voted in favour of a reduction of seats from forty-eight to forty. I supported the motion and the change, as did the members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Members on the opposite side of the House also supported that motion at that particular time. There will be additional communities in the district that I come from in relation to the new boundary change, the name change. The District of Bonavista South is going to be the new name of the district that I come from.

I look forward to representing the new communities that will be in the new District of Bonavista. I look forward to reaching out to each and every community, and each and every constituent in the new communities. I will work hard. I commit that I will work hard as the member in the House of Assembly as I continued to do in the last four years, Mr. Speaker. That is one thing that I can stand on my feet and say that, without doubt, I will represent the people of the new District of Bonavista, as I did with the District of Bonavista South.

I must say I am gifted in this House, I am surrounded by strong members: the Member for Baie Verte who gets up and speaks eloquently and with passion and pride on a continuous basis –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: The member on the right side of me for Cape St. Francis who has been in the House of Assembly for a long time and certainly a very experienced member who works hard on an annual basis on behalf of the constituents in his district; and in front of me there, the member who spoke recently, the Member for Exploits who gets up on his feet on a regular basis and carries home some of the issues that are

important to his district and the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am surrounded, like I said, with a great, great number of experienced, great members on this side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: From time to time I get up and I speak about the ministers, the people who sit in front of me, and the people who I have learned a lot from and the people that I connect with on a regular basis, but sometimes we need to talk about the members who are sitting here as well. We do have a great team on this side of the House, a great bunch of members who represent the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we will continue to work hard as we move into the future.

I listened to the previous speaker, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and no doubt there will be challenges; there always will be challenges in relation to government and what we do on a regular basis. Every day I am faced with a new challenge in the District of Bonavista South. That is not uncommon, but the resources that we have in relation to our constituency assistants who work hard on a regular basis on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Opposition leaders as well, and the Third Party, they do wonderful work on a regular basis, the staff that continue to be on the front line, out in our districts and here in Confederation Building. Then the staff that we actually talk to on a regular basis to help us through what we do in our jobs, Mr. Speaker, they provide great resources as well.

Being from the District of Bonavista South – I am from Bonavista and I am proud of that, and I know the issues in my district because I am from the district, which is very important, Mr. Speaker. I was raised in Bonavista, part of a large family. My wife actually is from the District of Bonavista South as well. She is from Elliston, a small community that certainly I have spoken on in the House of Assembly many times. The Town of Elliston is a beautiful town with a beautiful landscape and a beautiful ocean view. It is a town that did a wonderful job on behalf of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in the tourism industry. There are new

businesses out there and so forth due to what is happening in the tourism industry.

I am very proud of my district, knowing that I come from that district. My wife and I, we raised two children who lived in the District of Bonavista South for years and years, received an education there, and moved on. One of my children is actually living in St. John's in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. My other daughter is out in Alberta. I do have a grandson. They are coming back to this beautiful Province within a month. They are coming back to this beautiful Province within a month.

Now I will tell you what I am going to do, Mr. Speaker. I am going to take my grandson throughout the beautiful District of Bonavista South this upcoming summer. I just cannot wait to wrap my arms around him and take him through the district and take the salt water – do you know what I am saying? Take him to the beaches and the beautiful communities in the District of Bonavista South. So I am looking forward to that venture in the next few weeks.

You could tell that I am very passionate about the district that I come from. I can see how the district is growing and becoming a tourism icon, Mr. Speaker, in this great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I often speak on that when I rise in the House because I feel very passionate. I am proud of my roots, proud of where I have come from. I know that same sentiment spreads right across this full House of Assembly. Each and every MHA feels the same as well.

It is very important that we rise in the House of Assembly and speak on issues like this on a continued basis. The proposed District of Bonavista will have a population of 12,591. The Commission actually chose to keep the Bonavista Peninsula intact within the district. I feel good about that, Mr. Speaker, because any time that a district becomes divided, and especially an area that such significance and how it ties into the history and the heritage of this Province, it is important to keep that district intact based on history alone. I think that was one reason why the district of the Bonavista Peninsula is kept intact, which I feel was a very important move and I definitely support that. I

support it from different angles as well, Mr. Speaker.

The Commission worked hard and did some good work. Can we all say that we are all pleased? Probably not, Mr. Speaker, based on some of the outcomes in the Commission. Any time that the Commission makes a move to actually reduce the number of seats, there is going to be some challenges that we face as a government and as an Opposition, as a Third Party as well, but overall they have done some great work.

To amend the House of Assembly Act, as we are doing and speaking on here today, the bill would reduce the number of Members of the House of Assembly to forty; in effect the bill would reorganize the boundaries of the electoral districts in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; set a date when a general election shall be held in 2015 as a result of an overlap with the federal election; establish a mechanism to resolve future overlaps between federal and provincial elections; and to provide for an exception to the requirement to hold a by-election where a seat in the House of Assembly becomes vacant six months or less before the day a general election is required to be held.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that these particular numbers of items are outlined and we deal with these issues as we move forward in relation to this particular piece of legislation. I listened closely to the previous speakers in the House today, Mr. Speaker, and you can tell there is passion, there is pride, there is creativity coming from each and every speaker in relation to how they feel about their districts. My district in particular has a land area of approximately 2,175 square kilometres. I feel incumbent that I should name the communities as I stand here in this House today that will be in the new district.

AN HON. MEMBER: Happy New Year.

MR. LITTLE: The Opposition is saying happy New Year, and hopefully it will be a happy New Year. We are all looking forward to that.

I will definitely name the communities in the new district, the District of Bonavista. The communities include: the Town of Bonavista, Duntara, Elliston, Keels, King's Cove,

Musgravetown, Port Rexton, Trinity, Bunyan's Cove, Canning's Cove, Bloomfield, Lethbridge, Brooklyn, Morley's Siding, Portland-Jamestown-Winter Brook, Open Hall-Red Cliffe, Summerville-Princeton-Southern Bay, Charleston-Sweet Bay, Plate Cove East, Plate Cove West, Tickle Cove, Birchy Cove, Newman's Cove, Upper Amherst Cove, Dunfield, Bonaventure-Trouty, Trinity East, English Harbour-Champney's, Burgoyne's Cove, George's Brook, Harcourt-Monroe-Waterville, and Milton. You listen to the names of the coves. I am proud to listen to the names of the coves, Mr. Speaker.

Trinity Bay North, Melrose, Port Union, Catalina, and Little Catalina; great communities in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I must say, that contribute to the well-being and the prosperity of this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the great Province that we are part of.

I am delighted to be able to stand in the House of Assembly at this particular time with my colleagues to support this amendment. I have no problem in rising on my feet. I have talked to a number of people in the District of Bonavista South in relation to the boundary changes, and the recommendations of the Commission as well, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to working hard on behalf of the people in my district, and I look forward to going out to the district this summer and visiting every community in the district –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: – and talking to people first-hand. I will definitely highlight the positivity and the positive announcements that this government did within, in particular, the last four years, Mr. Speaker. I will highlight the positivity from the angle of where this Province is in comparison to other provinces in the country of Canada. We are leaders, this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: We will lead the people into the future, Mr. Speaker.

Anytime you stand on your feet and bring about change, positive change, change that will help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and when you are in challenging times and you are faced with some difficulties, that is where the leadership comes from, and the leaders on this side of the House continually show how we have become a strong government. We will weather the storm.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member to speak to the bill, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I definitely will bring it back to the bill, Mr. Speaker. I do have to highlight how the boundaries and how these changes will definitely take us into the future. We will continue as a government to definitely support the people of Newfoundland and Labrador even though there are changes, there is a reduction.

I can say for a fact that the people on this side of the House will represent the people well in their districts that they are part of. I know they will because they are hard workers. We will continue to work as a government and govern the people of Newfoundland and Labrador into the future, Mr. Speaker. We will definitely do that. I am looking forward to going out into the district and actually talking to people about some of the moves we made as a government in the future.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I think I have gotten my point out. I stated exactly where I stand as a member in the House of Assembly in relation to this amendment to Bill 13. I know for a fact that we will definitely prosper as a Province as we move into the future.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot say that I am really pleased to be on my feet to speak to this piece of legislation because I did not vote for forty-two. I am pleased to say I did not vote for forty-two because I think this House was under a lot of duress at the time.

I think it was placed in a position – how we got there, Mr. Speaker, actually remains to be questioned. I question the whole efficacy and the timing of why this came up in January in the first place, that this had to be done. The reduction of seats had to become a necessity. The reduction of seats had to be done now. People had to lose their representation now. It had to happen now because government said it had to happen now.

The worst part about it, Mr. Speaker, is Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition also agreed with the fact that representation had to be reduced. There is no way out of it. Free vote or not –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Whether we are going to have a free vote or not now, Mr. Speaker, either way, there was still a cost in representation of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Not necessarily Labrador, of course, because we were successful in protecting Labrador; but, either way, on the Island of Newfoundland we lost a number of seats. We lost effective representation. Free vote or not, it still cost somebody representation.

Mr. Speaker, when this piece of legislation came up it sounded like it was desperation on the part of government. That it had to be done now, that the number had to be forty. Of course, in the media there were several points in the past that were brought up by various leaders, that in some cases the numbers could have been as low as thirty-eight.

They were toyed with. The number was picked arbitrarily out of a hat, in my mind. That is where the number came from. We have no reasoning's from government as to why the number was forty. We still have not heard any good reasons as to why they settled on forty.

My understanding, Mr. Speaker, was that a commission – when it came in, in 2016 – were going to be the ones who were going to be choosing the number of seats if, in fact, there was actually going to be a reduction in seats, that they were the ones who would set the amount of seats in order for democracy to reign in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, it was Winston Churchill who said democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. I think he meant something by that. I think he kind of held his nose himself when he was talking about democracy.

This is one those cases, Mr. Speaker, where I think the people in Newfoundland and Labrador saw what was happening. Municipalities spoke out, various groups spoke out. I think government had to recognize all those groups that came out and spoke to the Commission and talked about those changes at the time were being made. We still do not know why forty seats, and I keep asking myself the same question.

Mr. Speaker, I come back and I think about my district, the great District of St. John's East, and all those associations, working relationships that built up over time, since October, 2011. I want to thank them right off the bat. They were receptive to me. They were kind to me. In some cases the residents and the groups there showed me the ropes, and I have to be thankful for them.

I have to be thankful for all of the schools, Mr. Speaker, that I built relationships with. Gonzaga, my old alma mater; Mary Queen of Peace, another school that I went to; Rennie's River; Vanier, to which my kids are going to school right now. All of these schools are great.

The Association for New Canadians; Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs that we worked with over the years; Chalker Place, the community centre and the people down there – all these working relationships that we built up over time. The seniors' homes and the people in them; I can think of Tiffany Court, Tiffany Village, Cambridge Estates – great people to work with. St. Pat's nursing home, Kenny's Park,

Glenbrook Lodge, all the residents there have become just like family and they really are family.

I am thinking about them an awful lot when I am standing on my feet talking about this because when the Commission came back and showed the change of boundaries to me, it was a bit of a shock that they actually took St. John's East and they carved it up in four different ways, Mr. Speaker. On the west end, you ended up with a residential area and Memorial University cut out of the district. To the north, in the new District of Winsor Lake, I lost another chunk, some great people up there that we had been working on issues with. Anywhere north of the parkway up around Belfast Street and London Road, Stony Castle Place, all these houses up there, Higgins Line, Ridge Road, all that section is gone from the district.

I look to the east and noted that anything from Torbay Road to the east, Conway Crescent, O'Regan Road where I grew up in and live, all that area was cut out from the district, gone, and the chunk that was left over was lumped in with Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, where most of my working relationships were and still exist.

Mr. Speaker, it was alarming to see, so we made a presentation to the Commission. One of the things that we wanted to do, myself and the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi – and this was important to us. It was important for her as much as it was for me because when you look at the districts potentially where you are going to be running, you look at where most of your relationships were and you look at how you are going to preserve those relationships. It was no different than any other member of the House here who that made the presentations to the Commission. They wanted to preserve the working relationships that they had.

Unfortunately for the working relationships that we had, the Commission did not look at them. They did not make any changes based on the working relationships that we had, so it was a bit of a loss for me personally. I still take it to heart –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: On that particular, Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is that you can look at this in two different ways, in my mind: number one, it might be a loss of relationships; but, number two, it might be a chance to form new ones too. In some cases, I have to look at that in a positive light.

Like I said, even though you are kind of distanced away because another district has been formed and the Commission has gone ahead and said well, we are not going to make that change, and we know that government is going to go ahead and make the change anyway by passing the vote, the opportunity is there to get out and actually make new relationships. I say that because of course the phone is ringing all the time, people asking where are you going to run – where are you going to run? I keep weighing the prospects too of where are you going to run. I would like to certainly stick close to home when it comes to that and see where those relationships are going to go.

Life is an adventure and you cannot really say no to any prospect that is out there. You cannot tell anybody no. The simple fact is that people just want effective representation. They do not care, sometimes, who it comes from, as long as they are going to have a voice in this House of Assembly. That is what makes this place great.

What does not make this place great is the way that Bill 42 came through and these changes resulted. I think that is what everybody in this Province has issues with. They are all asking themselves why it had to happen this way. What gave us the right? What gave the government the right to set that number at forty seats?

I say to some of the members of this House, you are darn right we did not put in any amendments because there was no sense of us putting in amendments, number one. They would have been turned down. Number two, they most certainly would not have been listened to. Number three, we did not agree with the legislation in the first place. It should never have happened. That is why we did not put in any amendments, Mr. Speaker. That is why to this day I still feel good about voting against Bill 42. Like I said, it was all about the loss of representation.

We have to look too at the same time as that – like I said, we had another issue here that became very burning in my mind because of government's rush to get here in the first place. We know of course in March that about forty-five days ago now, I think it is, or forty-six days ago, we had a problem come across our desk. We knew that the price of oil was collapsing.

Mr. Speaker, I said to myself, right off the bat, this government actually made the connection between democracy and oil because they wanted to save a little bit of money. They wanted to cost democracy. They wanted to pick the pocket of democracy by putting a number on it, Mr. Speaker.

They said it was at the time about two-and-a-half million dollars that the House of Assembly would save every year simply by the reduction of the number of people in the House, all at the expediency of this year's Budget \$1.1 billion in the hole. At the same time they cut off things like the Regional Economic Development Boards, they cut off representation, they actually made work – they are going to make things harder for our rural MHAs.

I think that the Member for Bay Verte – Green Bay has already stated that point that, yes, it is going to be hard. It is going to be pretty hard, but they are going to have to put their shoulders to the wheel. Well, you are darn right they are now because government has made the cuts previously to it and made things a little bit harder on this Province.

We have an awful lot here to atone for that we are not hearing from government. Mr. Speaker, it certainly cost us eight districts. It certainly cost us representation. The best way I tell this to people is just imagine if the federal government decided to redraw the Terms of Union and reduce the number of sitting members of Parliament here in the Province by one, there would be such a hue and cry in this Province over effective representation and our voice within the House of Commons that you would never be able to turn down the roar from them. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I think, would be highly upset that they would be losing one voice in the House of Commons, let alone losing eight voices here in the House of Assembly of the Province.

You can imagine the hue and cry that would be there from the rural areas of the Province that, in actual fact, would lose representation even if they rejig the boundaries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker is having difficulty hearing the hon. member. Can we have some courtesy, please?

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate the protection. I know that some of these points actually hurt government and I know that some of the government members over there are particularly interested in the reduction of representation. Some people are going to have a harder time getting hold of their MHA as much as they would if the reductions did happen federally, or as much as they would have problems in getting hold of their Member of Parliament too at the same time. I think that government members over there can see the point that if it happened, we would certainly protest loudly about it.

Mr. Speaker, the election date, I am in favour of the changes when it comes to the election date. I think November 30 is a good time to actually be getting around door to door – any time of the year actually is a good time for me to getting around door to door and saying hello to everybody; but the simple fact is that when we knew that this legislation was going to be coming forward, that the report was going to be done the first, possibly the second week of June, we knew as well that Elections NL were coming out and they were saying for sure that they were going to need a minimum of four months – at the time, I think it was Elections NL came out and said they were going to need a minimum of four months in order to institute all the changes that we contained within the report for the next election to happen. Am I right? I think I am pretty much right on that, that there would be a minimum of four months needed to institute all the work necessary on it – and I see that the

minister of business, trade and all of the above agrees with me on that particular point.

The simple fact is that we can do the math here because if you come out with the report early in the second week of June, you have July, August, September, October, there are your four months gone; have your election in November and there you go, we are off to the races. Of course we already know that there is a federal election that is going to be happening on October 19 at the same time. We had no other choice but to move the date. If you had to move the date up to September, like Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition was saying, you would be within three months of the guidelines of what Election NL were saying, and I think that is the point. That is why government had to go and move that particular date.

So either way, Mr. Speaker, democracy is going to happen on November 30. We hope it is going to be a high voter turnout, expressly to tell this government that they were not in favour of the changes that we made in the House of Assembly on Bill 42 and that they would get out there and express their voices on that.

Mr. Speaker, that is all I really wanted to say. Other than that, I am still not supportive of this piece of legislation. Number one, like I said, because of the changes in relationships here. We could not get some changes made obviously to keep and maintain some of the relationships that we had ongoing. It still concerns me. It eats me alive sometimes when I sit down and think about how much we have actually lost here when it comes to democracy. A Commission could do its work in 2016 and come back and institute changes for 2017, take its time with a new census.

Even in the District of St. John's East, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now where growth is going to be happening because we have the City of St. John's already that has approved a number of building projects down there that is going to make the population literally explode within St. John's East. That is going to be a change to the census numbers.

I know, for example, down on Torbay Road there are a number of apartment buildings that are going to be going down there, condominium

developments. That is going to change the population as well. We know, of course, that full-time kindergarten is going to be coming down. We have people moving into the east end, simply to access some of the better services and everything down there from the schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult at times, but like I said, when it comes to the simple fact with you losing relationships, it is also an opportunity here to gain some new relationships at the same time and help build again. So, it is going to be a tough call for some, including myself, in what happens. I think those choices, while they are tough, they are going to be made. They are going to be reasoned. They will be done with all the heart that is meant to be given to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, like I said, I have trouble supporting this bill. I will not be doing it. The work of democracy I know goes on, but let this be a lesson at the same time that government did this in haste. They did it based on the price of a barrel of oil. We know they panicked when they saw the numbers. They said the savings had to come from somewhere. Unfortunate as it is, they did not come out directly and say how much trouble we were in.

The simple fact is right now this government has put the price of democracy for eight particular districts at about \$2.5 million. The people of this Province, both in Newfoundland and Labrador, are asking themselves the question: Is democracy, is economy, is effective representation worth \$2.5 million?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very, very good thing to be able to stand on my feet today to talk for a few moments about the changes that are happening around us. If we look at the old saying, the only constant in the whole universe is the fact that we are always changing. You change, you adapt, you react to situations around the whole world, and every society or every group that has changed and

adapted to things that have come before them have gotten stronger and gotten better.

So, if we look at in that vein – and I do not want to really get into all the positivity that my friend from Bonavista South uses, but in the sense that if you look to the future with hope, and thinking about the vibrancy we have as a people, we can only image that we are going to continue on and thrive, and the situation we find ourselves in today.

Comments I want to make this afternoon, I do not know – like I stand on my feet very happily again. Everyone says you stand to represent your district. Sometimes you speak of the comments from people in your district. Some more times, Mr. Speaker, you speak from your heart or from your own mind. You have to mix all of these together. That is what makes our consciousness be our guide in what we want to say and how we want to proceed and go forward.

I heard the Third Party reference to democracy and the fact that this was a different deal. As much as you can argue and say that is not democracy, I can argue, Mr. Speaker, and say that when parties get together and unite, mould things, reflect on legislation before them, and make amendments to strengthen the legislation and stand up for rights and strong beliefs, that is democracy. Parties can work together.

It is not always that we are going to stand on this side of the House and be totally abhorrent to everything that happens on the other side, nor they to us. I think, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at and reflect the fact that we are in this Chamber and this is democracy in action. We can make such agreements from time to time and we vote for many things alike, sometimes as the Member for Gander would always say, unanimous. There are many things that every time someone votes in this House we are voting unanimously together for something that is positive and looking hopeful for the future.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been standing now for nearly four years representing the District of Bonavista North. The first time I put my name on the ballot was 1989, the same year the Member for Bay of Islands said he became a member in this hon.

House. He has been around since 1989, back and forth. I can just imagine how this whole place would be if I had been here to experience the whole things and changes with him.

There was another member in this House who ran in the same election in 1989, Mr. Speaker, and that was the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South. He was actually running as a young man in that election in 1989. Think of the changes that have happened since. I say that, only because I want to get into talking about how things have changed.

The biggest change in this whole thing is that for the first time since 1949 the name Bonavista North as a district will not be used. We have been a part of Confederation ever since 1949 and that name is not reflected now. In looking at the geography of the region, I can appreciate and understand how the Commission named the district as they did.

The new district that was the chunk of – because Bonavista North has not been carved, or separated, or sliced up in any way. Bonavista North has grown to the south and to the north and northeast, and gone overseas. We now have enlarged from a district of approximately 9,000 in population to a district of 14,000. So we are a little higher than the quotient, but that is only a challenge to whoever becomes the member in the future for that district.

Even though the size of that district may be greater than it has been before, there are ways that it is smaller, Mr. Speaker, than it was before. Our ways of communicating and getting back and forth have changed dramatically in the last forty to fifty years. Being able to service a group of that size with the transportation system and the communication system we have today is not the challenge that it would have been in 1949.

When Bonavista North went from the center of Bonavista Bay around Traytown – which is part of the Member for Terra Nova's district right now – and went as far as Cape Freels, which is recognized as one of the two names, now it is the entity for the new district, and in that region there was a small population but there was vast travel complications. Communication systems did not exist. Electricity was not in place in

most areas as well. So you can imagine the sort of Province we had back then compared to the Province we have today.

When you look at things changing, the district now that we see as Bonavista North is growing. The impact this legislation would have – and I want to bring that forward, Mr. Speaker, to be able to extend those words to the people on camera today, or on the other side of the camera who are in the district paying attention, because that is where most of the comments go.

When we travel around our districts now – I was in Wing's Point, Gander Bay, and Davidsville this weekend, and most of the people who want to ask questions, want to know two things: Are you still running? Who else is going to be voting in our district, or where are we, and what is the name of our district? Because they still do not have the connection of all of everything that has happened everywhere, Mr. Speaker.

When you explain to them that our district started in Trinity to the south before in Bonavista Bay, now we are going to extend and take in two communities that were for the last fifteen years in Terra Nova District, in Hare Bay-Dover. These communities were, when I ran back in 1989 the first time, they were in Bonavista North. Now they are back in.

The other way this is expanding, Mr. Speaker, is when we go to the north and northeast, the communities that were in Bonavista North from 1997 until 2007, Rodgers Cove and Victoria Cove, are now back in Bonavista North again. They were removed to be added to the great District of Lewisporte I would say, and, Mr. Speaker, is quite familiar with that district.

Also we have the communities of Horwood, Stoneville, and Port Albert. The communities that lead toward the connection with the other part, the new part of the district as well, Mr. Speaker. As we go a little further north, The Isles of Notre Dame are now part of the district that will be referred to – once we add Change Islands and Fogo Island. Then the new district, and I have not named it yet, is going to be referred to as Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

Many people to the farther south have questioned, and they thought that just by

mentioning to me, change would be made. They thought, well, Cape Freels is not the most southerly part of the district. Probably it might have been named Hare Bay, Fogo, Fogo Island – Hare Bay, if you want to put the two extremities there together. What is realized is that Cape Freels is the cape that leaves around Hare Bay. As you go towards that land mass coming out of the bay where a cape would be, then what you have is all points are leading to Cape Freels. Even though it is a very tiny community, the community itself of Cape Freels, but if people think it is called Cape Freels just after that community, then that is not necessarily – sure, Mr. Speaker.

What we need to think about here is that area, that idea of Cape Freels. The first integrated school board in Newfoundland and Labrador was the Cape Freels Integrated School Board, Mr. Speaker. It was not in the community of Cape Freels, but it took in most of the land mass that led out towards the cape from Deadman's Bay to Trinity, including Greenspond. That area, which is part of Bonavista North, was recognized as Cape Freels.

The development association that is out there right now is, when people refer to it as Cape Freels Development Association, it is a regional thing. Cape Freels is the region, Mr. Speaker. So naming of that may be appropriate. It may be an appropriate part of this. When you look at that in its entirety, it is really a fitting name.

The change that was made from the beginning of the Commission when its first report came out and the final one, is that it was changed from just called Fogo – Cape Freels – because the historic district that used to leave Fogo and come to the point of Cape Freels was originally just called Fogo back in the day, in the first twenty or thirty years of Confederation. That district, Mr. Speaker, is referenced now and it is part of this district, so the two older districts have been unified.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there has been some reference also made and I just want to get a point in too about the timing of this Commission and the impact right now. Back when I spoke to Bill 42, I was making a comment and I am not sure I finished the comment because my time was running short. I think I need to bring it back

now, just for a second, that in thinking about this, many people are critical of this particular action being taken in this year and not waiting until next year.

Well, one of the arguments you can look at that has nothing to do with finances or nothing to do with any particular leader, but if this Commission was to be done in 2016, the election, if it was going to have any impact, is already done and you have three years before the next election. My comment back in January was around the point that we know that the Commission meets every ten years to debate or to look at the redistribution of the districts. What happens is if you look at elections happen every four years, which means that inevitably there is going to be a conflict in timing such that an election and a Commission are going to happen in the same year, or are going to happen so close together that if you go – so really, do you do the Commission every eight years so that it is in the middle of districts when they happen?

Just to expound, Mr. Speaker, just that simple comment. Imagine this year we have now had a Commission and a boundary in the same year but if we went 2015, 2019, 2023, 2027, twelve years for districts, if were in 2016-2017, the next one then inevitably, ten years later for the Commission review, it would have hit right smack in an election again. So really, we need to think about the Commission and the review such that we space it in the future to match up with the concurrence of the four-year intervals in multiples of three or in two. Four obviously does not divide into ten, so therefore we need to think about that consideration in the future.

If we look back at the other parts of what this particular piece of legislation does, in the five Explanatory Notes: to reduce the number of Members of the House of Assembly to forty – which is what is being done and has been done and some of the decision making or the organization of this is done by the Commission, but the ultimate vote will come here on the floor of this House of Assembly to call it together in the next hours or days, however many that may be – whichever measurement we use.

The effect of the reorganization on the boundaries of the electoral districts – and I hope I spoke to that in the last few minutes – but to

also set a date when the general election shall be held in 2015 as a result of an overlap with the federal election is a piece of information that was left out of the previous legislation. That really needs to be placed in there, because this inevitably could have happened, can happen, will happen, and has happened in other provinces.

So, basically, having this piece of information as one of the important points in this bill, Bill 13, is very important that we do that, and we put things in place such that this does not happen in the future. Also to establish a mechanism to resolve the future overlaps between the federal and provincial elections. So that is put in place with this to do this as well.

The other piece of information here is to provide an exception to the requirement to hold by-elections if in the last six months leading into a general election someone resigns, then we would not have the necessity to say we are going have ninety days to impose the by-election, knowing that within a month or so later there is going to be a general election. So that helps with that, Mr. Speaker, to provide for mechanisms whereby when the Chief Electoral Officer would need to be focusing on getting ready for a provincial election, there would not be a by-election right smack dab, right before that.

Now, as everybody else said, they talk about the district. I have not listed all of the districts' names, but I talked about the new names of the communities that will be included with the names of this district. Again, for the record, to read it into the record, I cannot really omit the portion of the district that would have been the old District of Bonavista North.

So, the new district, Mr. Speaker, includes approximately forty communities, and it is – I say approximately because depending on how you think of them, the amalgamated towns, you refer to every small community of the amalgamated town, like in the case of New-Wes-Valley. Do you consider that as one community or eight or nine communities?

What is very important through all of this is that as a district, the new district still has many things in common, because the fishery is still a very vital link in the whole parts of the

communities. The whole region thrives on different denominational religious backgrounds, but again religion is very strong in the entire area. People are very firm in their faith and their beliefs in proper ways of living. I would just like to say, as I say all of the names of the district together now, that it is a very welcoming thought on my part that I may be able to offer myself as a candidate in that newly created district.

The district includes communities, and the first few names are coming alphabetically, and we refer to the NTV roll down of communities on New Year's Eve, but again that is not as important as mentioning them here in this House today.

The district includes amalgamated communities or municipal communities of Carmanville, Centreville-Wareham- Trinity, Change Islands, Dover, Fogo, Greenspond, Hare Bay, Indian Bay, Joe Batt's Arm-Barr'd Islands-Shoal Bay, Lumsden, Musgrave Harbour, New-Wes-Valley – and New-Wes-Valley would have included eight smaller communities but if you are not from the New-Wes-Valley area, you would think that there are only eight communities but in that local precinct, there are probably fifteen or sixteen because Badger's Quay is made up of colloquially about five or six little communities if you refer to Southwest Island, Tinker's Island, Pool's Island, Safe Harbour Square, and all these other little entities that exist, Mr. Speaker.

Seldom-Little Seldom, Tilting, Cape Freels North, Aspen Cove, Gander Bay North, Gander Bay South – and again Gander Bay North and Gander Bay South is like an amalgamation because in each of these communities these areas there are four or five local communities: Horwood, Main Point-Davidsville, Noggin Cove, Port Albert, Stoneville, Fredericton, Ladle Cove, and Deadman's Bay. The population is 14,035.

I would like just to say that it is very welcoming to be a part of this. Just as a final little aside, as a person, you always feel pride in everything you do and you have done, I would like to say that this is like the third event of this nature that has happened to me personally. I was the last Mayor of the Town of Wesleyville, an amalgamation happened, and Wesleyville was

no more, Mr. Speaker. We moved into New-Wes-Valley, it took four or five years for the names of the community to come together, but again the community is strong and it is vibrant so I am looking forward that way.

I became principal ultimately of a K-6 school, the charge of being a principal in a school. In my last year before retirement, that school closed its doors and joined together with Pearson Academy, but again, the two have come together and moved ahead in vibrancy, and with great promise for the future.

Now, I come here to sit in this hon. House and to stand in this hon. House to talk about Bonavista North – again, the name itself, it is like it is ominous that Bonavista North has a name that is not continuing on, but I am hoping to be able to be the person to represent the new, vibrant district that is going to be created, the promise and the hope and everything for the future we look forward to. I look forward to that with open arms. Come on with it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: I would just like to say it is always great to stand and speak.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): If the hon. minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

MR. KING: No, Mr. Speaker. I am just standing up, with leave of the House, to propose we will take a break now for supper and we will be back at 7:00 p.m., if that is fine with leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, my mistake. You were standing as the Government House Leader –

MR. KING: Yes, correct.

MR. SPEAKER: We will take a recess until 7:00 p.m.

MR. KING: That is correct.

MR. SPEAKER: Is everybody good with that?

The House will be in recess until 7:00 p.m.