



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

FIRST SESSION

Number 3

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Monday

April 19, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Labrador West, Harbour Main, St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise and Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge the Labrador West Winter Carnival committee members on another successful winter carnival. The added challenges of the pandemic did not deter our community from making the best of our pandemic winter.

Thank you to the committee members for taking the time to make this event possible, and allowing families in our community to have fun and enjoy the last few weeks of winter. Whether it was sharing pictures of a family gathering of a boil up in the great outdoors or just spending the day to pause and spread kindness, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the events.

A special congratulations goes to this year's teen ambassador scholarship winners, Allison Piercey and Cassidy Hedd, and the speech winner, Amanda Daniels. The teen ambassadors attended different events, completed different challenges and made the best out of Winter Carnival 2021. Congratulations to everyone who put themselves forward for these events.

I encourage all Members of this hon. House to join in thanking the committee members who made the Labrador West carnival a success this year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we celebrate National Volunteer Week, I would like to acknowledge the many dedicated volunteers in the great District of Harbour Main.

Volunteers are our everyday heroes, heroes who give generously of their time and talents to bring positive change in their communities, like the many church groups from Upper Gullies to North River; the recreation committees in Conception Harbour; the 50-plus clubs in Makinsons, Marysvale and Holyrood; the Avondale and Brigus sea cadets; every volunteer fire department and councillor in our municipal governments and local service districts. These are only a few of the many groups whose existence depends on volunteers.

I'm confident I speak for all Members when I say that each of us has a great appreciation for volunteers. As Members of the House of Assembly, volunteers play such an important role in the election process and keeping us connected to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to please join with me in saluting and thanking the many volunteers in our province who, as individuals, believe in the importance of service to others before themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If creation is the essence of entrepreneurship then Ivy Allan and Greg Hanley, owners of Urban Market 1919, have created something wonderful that raises supporting local to a new level, and they did this in the middle of a pandemic while the economy was struggling.

With a small family loan, and support from Nidus Development Incorporated, they embarked upon a business venture that is revitalizing the former Brookfield dairy factory

and adjacent properties, and supporting locally made and supplied goods.

In five months, Greg and Ivy have grown from selling the products of 50 to 150 small local vendors, everything from baked goods, meats, produce, arts, craft and clothing.

They employ 14 people directly. Additionally, some vendors quit their regular jobs to pursue their passion full-time; others have hired extra staff to keep up with the demand created by Urban Market 1919. The support of their staff, customers and vendors attests to the success of their vision, hard work and creative spirit.

Please join me in wishing Ivy and Greg success as they plan to expand their business and promote the history of the area, namely Alcock and Brown's first non-stop transatlantic flight in 1919.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to extend a happy 99th birthday to the Janes twins, Mabel Dawe and Alice Clarke, who grew up in Paradise.

Born in 1922, they came from a family of 10 children; both married and had families. Mabel moved to Conception Bay South in 1940, and Alice stayed in Paradise. Nowadays they live independently and, when pandemic restrictions allow, they spend as much time together as they can.

Growing up the twins used to make their own fun as young girls. In the winter they would slide down Paradise Hill, across Topsail Road and onto Neil's Pond. Their games were limited to things like hopscotch and skipping rope. As soon as they were old enough, the two worked for everything they had. They would pick berries and sell them to Purity. The little money they made went back to the family.

Knitting and hooking mats was another pastime. Using old clothes, they would hook rugs that would be used, not only to keep the home warm but also used to cover up and keep warm during the winter.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all to join me in wishing them a very happy birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I pay tribute to our dear friend Anabelle (Ang) Short Chatman who recently passed away. Ang was a CA to former Members Paul Oram and Sandy Collins and recently MHA Craig Pardy.

Ang was love, of life, people and, most of all, family. Her love was unconditional, whether it was the first time you met her, a lifelong friend or family member. Her heart had room for everyone and we all had a place in it.

This love she gave was returned tenfold by constituents. A constituent visited the office one time, noticed it was cold and returned later with a quilt.

Ang was an amazing worker who helped countless individuals to solve their issues, big or small. Ang filled every room with her laughter, infectious smile and larger-than-life personality. She liked providing commentary. When she was in hospital and saw Dr. Des, she commented loudly: Love to have that doctor down there check me out!

During her time with MHA Sandy Collins, people said they were inseparable and referred to Ang lovingly as the second wife. Sandy called her his best friend, buddy and confidant who always had his back.

Ang leaves the love of her life, Wade; daughter, Tanya (Ken); and grandchildren, Joseph, Evan and Gracie.

We will miss you dear friend. Rest in Peace.

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, last week, after nearly a decade of collective efforts, a sixth bronze caribou monument was installed in Gallipoli, Turkey, finally completing the Trail of the Caribou.

The Gallipoli monument was a key legacy project of Honour 100, the province's First World War commemorations initiative established in 2012. Ask any Newfoundlander and Labradorian what significant historical event has defined us and you will hear the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the First World War.

Proudly worn on the regimental cap badge, the caribou is a symbol of courage and strength. The final caribou monument honours the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's involvement in the Gallipoli campaign from 1915 to 1916, the only Regiment from North America to serve there during the First World War.

In July 2020, InnovativeNL, a St. John's engineering and project management firm, was chosen to undertake the fabrication and installation of the Gallipoli monument.

Mr. Speaker, 19 students from the College of the North Atlantic's Geomatics/Surveying Engineering Technology program also worked on this historic project, utilizing 3-D modelling software to digitally scan the Bowring Park caribou to assist with the fabrication process.

The bronze caribou weighs approximately 1,500 pounds; measures approximately 10 feet from the nose to the back; and approximately eight feet from top to bottom. It sits 25 metres northwest of Hill 10 Cemetery in Gallipoli, the final resting place of eight regimental soldiers including Private Hugh McWhiter of Humbermouth, Bay of Islands, the Regiment's first casualty at Gallipoli.

After the war, Padre Thomas Nangle began the arduous process of burying our soldiers. During the 1920s, he successfully placed caribou monuments at significant sites throughout Northern France and Belgium, which have

become affectionately known by all as the Trail of the Caribou.

My family and I had the privilege of following the Trail of the Caribou through France and Belgium in 2016, the year that marked the 100th anniversary of the tragic Battle of Beaumont-Hamel. It was an incredibly moving experience.

Mr. Speaker, completing the Trail of the Caribou is a historic moment for Newfoundland and Labrador. Many thanks to the Government of Canada and the Republic of Turkey for recognizing the monument's historical significance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and allowing us to properly pay tribute to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's service and sacrifice.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I join with the Premier in recognizing the completion of the Trail of the Caribou. The final Caribou monument in Gallipoli completes a touching and fitting tribute to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's involvement in the First World War.

I thank the Government of Canada, the Republic of Turkey and all those who worked collaboratively to help honour our brave Regiment. I'm also delighted that students from the College of the North Atlantic and a local engineering and project management firm were able to play a part in this monument.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

It is wonderful news that the last caribou is watching over our own in Gallipoli. With the help of modern technology and homegrown skill, 100 years later this has come to fruition – an amazing achievement.

I'd also like to recognize the efforts of Larry Weatherbie from Tourism, who unfortunately passed earlier this year. He worked closely with former Speaker Trimper in helping get the site approved by the Turkish government, a great achievement of diplomacy and mutual understanding between former combatants.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to ask residents to share their bold ideas on ways to strengthen, improve, and transform our provincial finances in advance of budget 2021. The portal to provide comment, which first opened in January, will be available for submissions until April 30, 2021.

Harnessing the creativity, ingenuity and tenacity of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will help forge a path forward and tackle the important issues facing our province.

Together, we can build a better future.

We will modernize and transform government, address our structural challenges and move forward with strength.

Mr. Speaker, we have spoken with a multitude of stakeholders including community, municipal, business and labour leaders. We have received many engagements with citizens.

Now have your say on how to transform and strengthen this great province. We welcome big, bold ideas on reducing the province's deficit, minimizing the impact on public services and

contributing to a more diversified and growing economy. This insight, as well as the recommendations of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team and Health Accord NL, will help to inform our path forward.

I encourage residents to submit their ideas on modernizing government online at engagenl.ca or by email at Budget2021@gov.nl.ca by April 30.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the hard-working officials in the Department of Finance who are undoubtedly working diligently to prepare the upcoming budget.

While I always encourage public engagement and public discussion on our province's finances, I have to question how the minister can expect people to provide commentary when she has not publicly released the Greene report. Asking people for feedback with only 11 days left until the deadline while hiding the Greene report is, frankly, disrespectful to the public. The people of this province have valuable suggestions, but they can only contribute if they are provided upfront and honest information, something the minister is not doing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for a copy of her statement. Seeking to build a better future for the people of our province and seeking their input is laudable, but to require residents to submit their ideas online or via email is counterproductive and exclusionary. People without connectivity

devices or the technological savvy will not be heard.

If anything, we should've learned from the recent election mess. We need to improve and strengthen participation and inclusivity, not discourage it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome all Members back to this hon. House and extend a special welcome to the new MHAs. This past election exposed serious weaknesses with the many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians denied their fundamental right to vote.

While we all agree our province's election legislation needs to be reformed, I ask the Premier: Does he still have confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, that is an independent Officer of the House and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on my personal views. He responds to the House.

We have committed, as the Member opposite has agreed, to undertake a modernization of the Elections Act. We're looking in the rear-view mirror now: what went well, what didn't go well. It's incumbent upon all of us in the House to improve the process moving forward to ensure that all franchises are exercised to the best of our ability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last Thursday, Bill 1 was introduced into the House, yet a review of the election has not taken place.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to a full, independent review by an outside expert and that this review be completed before any legislation is debated in the House of Assembly?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've committed to modernizing the Elections Act, including tasking the Minister of Justice with seeking consultations from the Members opposite, to ensure that we are bringing forward the most modern Elections Act in Canadian history. We will continue to promote that and to execute on that.

There are matters before the court. The judiciary is an independent body of course, they can opine on other elements, but we're not going to wait for their report, for their findings in order to modernize the Elections Act. This should be a living document, a dynamic document that we are updating regularly, and that's our commitment to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our PC caucus is calling for an independent review to ensure an unbiased analysis is conducted so that an election, like in 2021, never happens again.

I ask the Premier: How can he introduce a bill without having a full, independent and unbiased review completed of what happened during election 2021?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question.

First of all, I would like to say what an honour it is to be here speaking for the first time in the House of Assembly. I certainly want to thank all of the voters in Windsor Lake who decided to put me here and who have faith in me, have faith in the Premier and faith in the full team on this side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I'm sure, as Members in the House of Assembly know, the judiciary is completely independent from the legislative branch of this government. There are individuals who have decided to bring certain issues related to the election to the courts, and I'm not going to speak on any specific matters that are before the courts, but I'm happy to report, as everybody knows, that the judiciary will remain independent and do an investigation and report back through due course.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Democratic changes should be driven not by one party, not by one minister, but by an all-party committee of this House.

Will the Premier agree that the Select Committee on Democratic Reform be tasked with developing new election legislation in light of the finding of an independent review of election 2021?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker.

As Members know, the Opposition Members here represent both Opposition parties and they're aware that the Premier has committed to bringing new legislation for a new Elections Act that will modernize elections in Newfoundland and Labrador. Everyone in this House of Assembly will have a chance to question it, propose amendments and ask questions. It will be fully debated for the public to see and for the Opposition Members to participate in as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: I take it from that answer, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance would she table the draft copy of the Greene report that she has received.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and public safety – sorry.

S. COADY: President of Treasury Board.

SPEAKER: President of Treasury Board.

Sorry, first day.

S. COADY: You're doing a great job, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. It is an important question. As the Member opposite is aware, and indeed all residents in Newfoundland and Labrador are aware, Moya Greene's report and that of the Premier's Economic Recovery task force is expected some time toward the end of April. I do not have a copy of that report, Mr. Speaker, at this time but I am expecting it in due course.

To his response to my ministerial statement, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said categorically that we will be doing a full consultation process on the Greene report as it's received.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Premier mandated the Minister of Finance to implement the recommendations of the Greene report. If the minister does not have a copy of the Greene report, I ask the Premier will he table the draft copy of the Greene report that he has received.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question.

I will say that government has not yet received a copy of the Premier's Economic Recovery task force. As the people of the province know, and the Member opposite certainly does know, it will be received within the coming weeks, and as has the Premier said during the election campaign it will be made public. It will be discussed, reviewed; it will be debated and then we will move forward with any implementation coming from that report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Greene report was supposed to have been delayed six weeks. I think the six weeks have passed, to hear that there's still no interim copy of the Greene report, I think it's a little late.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the federal budget will be released today. On March 20, 2020, Premier Ball wrote the federal government to say that our province has run out of time.

I ask the Premier: Did he write the prime minister setting out the province's top priorities for the budget? If so, will he table the letter and the prime minister's response?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you for the question and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have not written the prime minister, but have had many discussions with the prime minister about the priorities moving forward for our government, including –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

PREMIER A. FUREY: Cellphones, they're turned on all the time, of course.

We've put significant priorities in place, including being the green battery that drives Eastern Canada and the northeastern seaboard. We're looking forward to what today's budget brings, including notices on child care, pharmacare and long-term care. This is what can happen when you have a strong federation and co-operation, different than what the Member opposite has proposed in the past.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a new Member, I look around this hon. House and I see many former municipal colleagues. I'm sure that they will agree with me on the importance of training for municipal leaders.

I ask the new Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs: Will you be making changes to the *Municipalities Act, 1999* to require mandatory training for all municipal councillors?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question to the Member opposite.

I would like to start by saying what a privilege it is to sit here amongst my colleagues today and be given the opportunity to speak to this. I would like to thank the people of my district, who had the faith and confidence in me to put me in this chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: I would like to let you know that the municipal legislation has been under review. There has been significant work done and it is a priority for our department. I've been briefed extensively on the work that's done.

We're not starting over, so we're looking to move forward. We fully engage with stakeholders and the people that will be making these decisions to ensure that everybody's needs are met and the good work continues.

We want to reimagine and reinvent how things work for our municipalities, and that's certainly a part of our plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the Speech from the Throne last Thursday, it was indicated that municipal legislation would be introduced by this government. Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators have been at the table with government for quite some time trying to advance this issue.

Can the hon. minister please provide a timeline for this mandatory municipal councillor training?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned before, this review is a priority. I have had the opportunity to have conversations with several of the stakeholders. We're still working through these things to make sure that everybody is represented and questions are answered and clarification is provided. When it is ready, we will present it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week, we saw significant rainfall in the capital city and pictures quickly emerged on social media of flooding at the site of the new mental health and addictions facility.

Mr. Speaker, will the new minister immediately order a review of the construction in this flood plain?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question.

I saw those pictures from last week as well, the berms that have been under construction around that hospital site were required no matter if the new hospital was to be built or not. To answer your question: No, I don't plan to do a further review of that, at this point.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the pictures speak for themselves. This was not a tropical storm or record-breaking rainfall. Why is the minister continuing to surge ahead with a facility that we already know is \$39 million more than the next lowest bidder and will take a year longer to build, even when the City of St. John's says it's being built in the wrong location?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think what needs to be noted here is that those pictures were not the true site of where that facility is going to be built, Mr. Speaker. That's very important to note that; that's a good piece of information.

In terms of the conversation or the question that should be asked here around what is going to be inside that building, and that's services for people that are facing mental health challenges in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: I get it in my district, and I'm proud this is the beginning of a good plan for those that are faced with the difficulties around mental health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association continues to speak out about the lack of priority for vaccinating teachers.

While we all support in-school learning, teachers are at the lower end of Phase 2 to get vaccinated. The NLTA believes this indicates a disconnect and lack of concern for teacher safety.

Minister, are we not compromising the safety of our teachers in the classrooms?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is great to be back. Thank you to the people of the District of Gander and thank you to the Premier for plonking me back in this chair again, I appreciate it.

In reference to the question, we are currently in Phase 2; Phase 2, for the benefits of Members, includes teachers. We will have that concluded, possibly, as early as three weeks, in light of new vaccine delivery information.

Mr. Speaker, we are keen to get on with this process, to get on with vaccinations and to get on with our lives. We are not forgetting anyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate your reply, Minister, but we surely need to protect all our front-line workers. Under your time frame, school will be over before these teachers are vaccinated; not in three weeks, not according to the timelines.

Minister, action needs to happen now, not later; three weeks' time is fine, but that's still not answering when you have three weeks of school ahead and we're running into the end of the school year.

The end of the school year is too late. Can this be done sooner, Minister?

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

J. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, it's been awhile since my children were in school, but I don't think in three weeks' time the school year will be finished. Quite frankly, that is the time that we're looking at now with accelerated vaccine deliveries to have these programs completed. I would suspect that we will be ahead of our schedule, but I'd much prefer to under promise and over deliver.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Howard Russell of Port Hope Simpson is now on life support. His family believes this could've been prevented if the medical system hadn't failed him. The minister first said the weather was the problem, then he went back and said it was an operational issue.

I ask the minister: Will he provide us with a straight answer on how this government failed Mr. Russell?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, and I thank the hon. Member, Mr. Speaker, for the question on this very important issue.

As the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, I am deeply troubled when issues are raised by Labradorians about difficulties they encounter in accessing health care services. I have been engaged directly with the family members from the earliest hours, I would say, Mr. Speaker. I did note the Opposition's press release on day five.

I understand the stress and frustration that they have experienced in advocating for immediate help, and while I cannot speak, nor will I speak to individual circumstances for privacy reasons, I stand behind my statement that as a government we can do better and we must do better. This whole situation is being reviewed, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This situation could've occurred anywhere in Labrador. I have been speaking to the family – the press release may have gone out on day 5, but I have been speaking with the family and other members of Labrador that are concerned about this.

Mr. Speaker, the minister, when referring to medical transportation in December, said: "I would argue there is discrimination in favour of Labradorians"

Considering Mr. Howard Russell had to wait 36 hours for a medevac and is now on life support because the medical transportation failed, will he still confirm and affirm that he believes this to be true?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Member, I think, doesn't advance her argument by taking previous comments of mine out of context and trying to manipulate them. With regard to this situation with the family, it is a distressing situation for them and for the patient.

From the point of view of actions here, Labrador-Grenfell has been in direct contact with his next of kin. I have instructed Labrador-Grenfell to undertake a full quality assurance review, a vigorous one, under the *Patient Safety Act*. We will get to the bottom of this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, in the 2019 election, the Liberal premier promised to reinstate the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood. The minister committed to that promise for January 2021. Then, during the 2021 election, the Liberal candidate announced it would reopen.

Can the minister provide the specific time that the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood will reopen?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question.

The protective care unit in Botwood, all \$20 million of it, will be ready to accept patients from the community by June. Indeed, it has already had patients move into the new wing in order to refurbish some rooms in the old wing.

With regard to the requirements and the needs of the communities in and around Botwood, the commitment was that when the unit was fully staffed, a needs assessment would be done and arrangements made to match service to demand. That will happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, after seven years and three administrations, the Lionel Kelland Hospice is still not open. I was very happy to see the Premier come out and make that commitment once again.

My question to the minister is: What is the status of the hospice right now, as people still die in hallways of hospitals and in their homes where they shouldn't have to. When is the finish date going to be completed?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The department have been in discussions with the board of Lionel Kelland Hospice. The capital money has been transferred through Central Health to enable them to get on with the renos.

The discussions at the moment are around staffing and what the right model should be for what will be the province's first residential hospice. I cannot give a date as to when those will conclude; they have been delayed by COVID. But I can certainly go back and will be

happy to discuss that with the Member when I can get an update.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dentists are front-line health care professionals who work in extremely close contact with patients, who obviously cannot wear face masks during dental procedures. Dentists do not understand why they are not higher up on the vaccine priority list as front-line health care professionals.

When will our province's dentists be offered vaccines?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The dentists were included in front-line essential health care workers and designated under Phase 2. There is a graphic on our website which shows exactly when those vaccines will start.

We have actually started ahead of schedule. As I referenced in answer to a previous question, we should be getting through those groups within the next three weeks. We have, on Friday, reached out to the Dental Association to make sure we don't miss anybody, Mr. Speaker. It's coming.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Almost all of the COVID cases reported in Newfoundland and Labrador are travel related, and COVID continues to surge in other provinces. In a province starved for jobs, rotational workers are essential to our economy.

When will every rotational worker in this province be offered a vaccine?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We've been very conscious of the stress that this pandemic has placed on everybody, but particularly on rotational workers. That is why over the course of the pandemic I think we made no fewer than six adaptations to try and improve the circumstances under which rotational workers can come home and do so safely. As the Member points out, the vast majority of our cases, since the last surge died down, are from travel and travel within Canada.

We will continue to examine the evidence and do what is best for them to make sure they can do it safely. They, too, are in Phase 2, and I would reiterate my previous answers for dentists and teachers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When the minister mentioned earlier about underpromising, it's difficult to take him on his word in terms of the schedule.

Mr. Speaker, a number of rotational workers that identified as Indigenous have applied to receive their vaccine; many have work schedules of two weeks on and two weeks off. They have been told they cannot receive their vaccine during their isolation period.

If these Indigenous rotational workers are always in self-isolation while in the province, how do they obtain their vaccine?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That is not the direction that was given to the regional health authorities. If the Member opposite has a name and an MCP number, I would be happy to investigate that for him.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, can the minister please give an update on exactly how much funding has been given to the Terra Nova FPSO and the number of local jobs that were created as a result?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think what the Member is referring to is the money that would have come from the \$320-million federal funding that was announced back in January. What I can say at this point is that no funding has been provided right now because we're still working on that deal. The \$175 million is contingent on the long-term extension and life of that platform, as well as the creation of jobs, which we are still working on.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, can the minister given an update on the future of the Terra Nova FPSO? Will the FPSO be retrofitted and upgraded here in this province and returned to production to employ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, or will it be shipped off to Spain?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As everybody knows, the Terra Nova has been off since December of 2019, pre-pandemic, and it has not be online since then. What I can say is that we continue to work with the partnership here to ensure alignment of all the partners in this.

We want to see the FPSO back working; we want to see long-term work coming out of that and we will continue to do that. At the end of the day, this is a private deal. This is not one that the province right now is even a partner in, but we will continue to do what we can. We have offered money from the federal fund, we've offered royalty relief, and we will continue to do what we can in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and employees of this operation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, the C-NLOPB has decided not to call for bids in the Jeanne d'Arc Basin this year.

I ask the minister: Is this a sign that your government is giving up on our offshore industry as an employer for local residents?

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

A. PARSONS: I could give a straight answer to that and just say, Mr. Speaker, that, no, this is not a sign of anything except right now, as I've stated multiple times in this House, we have an industry that's going through a tough time. One of the first things that get cut, when you have a crash in the system like we've had, is exploration budgets and capital expenditures. That's one of the first things that you see go.

The reality is that we've had trouble there, the same as we've had trouble all over the world when it comes to exploration. We have done what we can in terms of offering exploration incentives. I would like to point out that just recently we saw a drill ship come right here to

the province. We are going to see some work here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we've seen over the weekend, the Premier has offered medical help to Ontario. For years, Labradorians have faced a shortage of family doctors; our air ambulance services are stretched thin. Every day Labradorians are forced to come into St. John's to seek services once available in Labrador.

I ask the Premier: Where is Labrador's help?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's unfortunate that false equivalency has been put forward as an argument. We are committed, as we said during the election campaign and as Minister Dempster has suggested, to helping the people of Labrador improve the access to care. That's something we believe firmly in and we believe we can do a better job of.

But that's not the same as arguing that we shouldn't be helping people in Ontario as they face the largest crisis in their history, Mr. Speaker. I believe Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to step up as they've stepped up in the past. We'll be there to support our brothers and sisters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier immediately re-establish the All-Party Committee on Democratic Reform, answerable to the House of Assembly, using the structure that existed prior

to the election, but with the additional mandate of providing recommendations on modernizing the Elections Act.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

As the Member opposite would know from our meeting earlier today, we are in the process right now of striking our Committees, something that we will be doing throughout the next couple of weeks as we move forward into what would be the next part of the spring session.

I say to the hon. Member, we will certainly be looking at that as one of the Committees we will strike as we go forward.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, why did this government not prioritize seniors in this Throne Speech?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind this hon. House that seniors are very, very valued by this government. I can tell you if we were not grappling with the mess from Muskrat Falls, we'd be doing more for seniors.

Right from *Budget 2016*, Mr. Speaker, right out of the gate there is \$122 million that continues to be put aside despite the fiscal climate –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: – for low income and for our seniors. Mr. Speaker, we have a number of programs right across government that ranges from Provincial Home Repair to Home Modification.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, they asked a question but they don't want the answer. They do not want to know what we are doing for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, we set up the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, only the third such office in this country, so that they would have another independent office to advocate for them and raise the important issues (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Labrador West is one of the only regions in this province that do not have any form of affordable seniors' housing or any type of assisted living. Many seniors are forced to leave their communities and families.

I ask the minister: Why do seniors in Labrador West continue to be denied the same services elsewhere in the province? Or does the minister still believe Labradorians are unfavourably – favoured in the health care system?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm going a little bit from memory, but since my time in Housing since 2017, I believe we've been fairly – favourably to Labrador West. We have spent about \$3 million on upgrades in Labrador West; I understand right now that there is a housing vacancy of about 19 units. We have just gone out to tender on five of those units and we are going to be doing repairs to another five in-house. Some of that work should be getting underway by the end of May.

We are challenged, Mr. Speaker, around this province when it comes to housing and some of the needs. We have older housing stock with larger homes and newer families that need one-

and two-bedroom and we are working through it. But I will tell you that the people of Labrador West, they have done well and, right now, we are continuing to do a piece of work with the people of Labrador West again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard two answers to the question of democratic reform, which are both vague, nothing approaching a strong committal, so I'll ask it clearly again: Will the Premier support and re-establish the All-Party Committee on Democratic Reform answerable to the House of Assembly, using a structure that existed prior to the election with the additional mandate of providing recommendations on modernizing the Elections Act?

We've heard, Mr. Speaker, that co-operation will take place here in the House of Assembly, that we'll talk about it at the Striking Committee. What I have not heard is a commitment that this will be supported.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I can tell the hon. Member that we will take the democratic reform file very serious. What I can also tell him is we haven't finished striking our Committees for the upcoming 50th General Assembly. We will certainly be reaching out to the Opposition Parties in the coming days, as we go forward with our Striking Committee, for all of our Committees as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, residents of Labrador West have been waiting two years for a solution that's growing, needing affordable housing for everybody.

I ask the Premier: Why does his government continue to ignore the 19 vacant NL Housing units that are in desperate need of repair in my region?

SPEAKER: A quick response, please.

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible) so I can go quick. We are moving on that.

Mr. Speaker, we just went out with an RFP. It closed; work is starting at the end of May. We have five other units there that we're going to be working at in-house.

When we look at the tremendous needs around this province with housing, we've prioritized some of the work in Labrador West and we're going to deliver on those, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Children, Youth And Families Act, Bill 11.

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Energy Corporation Act And The Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, Bill 9.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly, Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, Bill 10.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Auditor General Act* provides that the Auditor General is to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on a resolution of the House;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Ms. Denise Hanrahan be appointed as the Auditor General effective April 22, 2021.

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

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following motion:

WHEREAS the cornerstone of any democratic society is the right for citizens to choose their representatives to serve in the legislature; and

WHEREAS the process for electing their representatives must not only be carried out in a fair and impartial manner with all of the appropriate checks and balances to ensure this

principle is upheld, it must be perceived as being conducted that way; and

WHEREAS the recent Newfoundland and Labrador provincial general election has brought serious allegations, numerous concerns and inconsistencies to light, including but not necessarily limited to the following: certain individuals knowingly being permitted to vote by telephone in contravention to the Elections Act; ballots being hand delivered by the Chief Electoral Officer to acquaintances and neighbors; a number of computer and phone line crashes at Elections NL, including on the final evening to apply for ballots, leading to numerous citizens who applied within the established timeline not receiving a ballot; an under-resourcing of Election NL's call centre which led to citizens having to call numerous times to get through to apply for a ballot and some simply giving up out of frustration and not getting a ballot at all; individuals being provided ballots in person and over the phone without any verification of identity and/or address; individuals receiving incomplete ballot kits; individuals receiving multiple ballots; ballots being sent to the wrong civic address; individuals applying for ballots online or by telephone not receiving their ballots, and upon inquiring with Elections NL being told they had no record of their application and were subsequently denied their right to vote; Indigenous citizens being denied their right to vote due to language barriers not addressed by Elections NL; numerous concerns with the process implemented by Elections NL relating to the scrutinizing and witnessing of the opening, counting and recording of the ballots; allegations of Elections NL staff taking ballot kits and other related materials to their homes, as well as further allegations of individuals being permitted to print their own ballots, which were subsequently accepted by Elections NL; and

WHEREAS in a VOXM News story of April 9, 2021, an anonymous whistle-blower inside Elections NL was reported as making the following observation –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS in a VOXM News story of April 9, 2021, an anonymous whistle-blower inside Elections NL was reported as making the following observation:

“The former employee claims that an apparent lack of direction exacerbated an already difficult situation, comparing it to a ‘three-ring circus.’ That included the sudden change in Elections NL’s in-house voting software and a registration process that they say left the door open to potential voter fraud.

“The worker tells VOXM News duplicate and even triplicate ballots were sent out after some voters reported they hadn’t received their ballots and because of the volume of requests, verification of a voter’s name, age and address became difficult, if not impossible, especially in households with more than one voter.

“Their conclusion? ‘This election should have been delayed,’ says the worker, because decisions were made ‘hastily, with no forethought’ and that the election was not ‘well planned’ or ‘well-executed.’”

WHEREAS the Chief Electoral Officer stated publicly prior to the election, that Elections NL was prepared and able to successfully conduct a pandemic election and this was obviously not the case; and

WHEREAS the Chief Electoral Officer has the ultimate responsibility for the carrying out of fair, democratic elections in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in accordance with the provisions of the *Elections Act, 1991* but preliminary evidence suggests that he has fallen short in this regard; and

WHEREAS the Chief Electoral Officer reports directly to and is responsible to this hon. House; and

WHEREAS we, as Member of this hon. House, have a responsibility to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure all of our Officers of the House of Assembly, including the Chief Electoral Officer, are carrying out their duties in an ethical and competent manner; and

WHEREAS Section 5.3 of the *Elections Act, 1991*, states: “The Lieutenant-Governor in

Council, on resolution of the House of Assembly passed by a majority vote of the members of the House of Assembly actually voting, may suspend or remove the Chief Electoral Officer from office because of incapacity to act or for misconduct, cause or neglect of duty.”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly approve the following actions: Development of a terms of reference for an initiation of an independent investigation of the recent provincial general election to be carried out by an individual or entity as agreed to by all parties and independent Members of the House; and upon completion of the investigation, tabling and debating of the report in the House of Assembly, including whether or not Section 5.3 of the *Elections Act, 1991*, should be applied based on the findings of said report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move the following private Member’s resolution:

WHEREAS it is imperative that the province’s election legislation, policies and procedures be reformed properly so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are never again denied their fundamental right to vote and deprived of the clear information they require to exercise their right; and

WHEREAS the most responsible way to determine which changes must be made is first to get a thorough, independent and unbiased analysis of what went wrong; and

WHEREAS it is not appropriate for the Chief Electoral Officer to conduct the review because an investigation of the 2021 election will place under scrutiny the work of the CEO himself and his compliance with the *Elections Act, 1991*, which requires the CEO “to exercise general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of elections and to enforce on the part of election officers fairness, impartiality and compliance with this Act”; and

WHEREAS it is appropriate during such an investigation that the Chief Electoral Officer who oversaw the election be suspended; and

WHEREAS Section 5.3 of the *Elections Act, 1991*, titled Removal or Suspension states: “The Lieutenant-Governor in Council, on resolution of the House of Assembly passed by a majority vote of the members of the House of Assembly actually voting, may suspect or remove the Chief Electoral Officer from office because of an incapacity to act or for misconduct, cause or neglect of duty”; and

WHEREAS the House of Assembly on December 4, 2019, voted unanimously to establish a Select Committee on Democratic Reform, which serves as a model of appropriate form to collaborate on various election reform options before any amendments are brought to the House of Assembly;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a respected, independent individual be appointed to review the conduct of the 2021 general election to determine what went wrong and to report the findings of this investigation to the House within 30 days; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Mr. Bruce Chaulk be suspended as Chief Electoral Officer during this investigation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a Select Committee of the House of Assembly on Democratic Reform be struck to collaborate in developing recommendations to reform the province’s election legislation, policies and procedures in light of the findings of the independent review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The said motion will be debated during the private Member’s resolution on Wednesday?

B. PETTEN: Yes, this will be the motion debated on Wednesday (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Any other notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I managed to beat all of my colleagues.

In October 2020, the most sophisticated flood-risk mapping ever completed in our province was presented to the District of Lake Melville for the Lower Churchill River. This extensive investigation incorporated several weather parameters, detailed LiDAR topographic mapping and projections for climate change.

The predictions are that several homes in Mud Lake and vicinity will, again, be subjected to extensive flooding within the next 20 years. We now know that several residents of our province and their property are at significant risk of facing another disaster comparable to May 2017.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon this House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to enhance measures for the protection of property and relocate those most vulnerable to a safer location.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this matter forward in December of last year and, unfortunately, the election and its protracted timeline has meant that now we find ourselves, literally today, with the largest river in this province now approaching its flood.

I appreciate the support of the Minister of Labrador Affairs and others that have been involved, I think, also in Transportation – we’ve started a helicopter shuttle this morning to make sure that residents can safely move back and forth because we have a very dangerous situation.

We have, as a government and through my own office, established several important investments in monitoring equipment of ice, water, flood forecasting and so on, but that still doesn’t mean we can do anything to control this large river.

We do have now control structures at Muskrat Falls and the Upper Churchill in Churchill Falls; however, we still have a very dangerous situation.

Now, we have a million dollar study that is literally state of the art and it is saying we will have a very serious problem within the next few years. Mr. Speaker, I don't know, frankly, if it could be this year; it could be this month coming up. I don't want to sound alarmist, but I do need attention.

I'm very pleased to say that I have had an early conversation with the minister now responsible and she is amenable to having further discussions. I'm hoping that she will be able to come to Labrador, meet with the residents and see the situation for herself.

I thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker, to raise this very important matter before this House of Assembly, again.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any other petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 9.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition, that the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay be appointed as Deputy Speaker.

SPEAKER: The motion is that the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay be nominated as Deputy Speaker.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Monday, April 19, 2021; seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

SPEAKER: The motion is that we do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

SPEAKER: Motion 3?

S. CROCKER: Yes.

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I have received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

SPEAKER: All rise.

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the province for the year ending 31 March 2022, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____
Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply.

SPEAKER: The motion is that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 2, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Resolution

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

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 the sum of \$2,086,721,900.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Today, we've actually introduced two Interim Supply bills. The approval of the first bill, which is Bill 2, the bill that you read into the record, will serve to confirm the amount issued by special warrant for the two-month period April 1 to May 31 with a total allocation of \$2,086,721,900.

Mr. Chair, by bringing the special warrant allocation to the House of Assembly we are being consistent with the spirit and intent of the *Financial Administration Act*, which specifies that appropriations should be approved in the Legislature.

Mr. Chair, I'll refer those in this House or those listening to section 28(3.1) which states and I'll quote: "Where at the end of a fiscal year the House of Assembly is dissolved and an appropriation to defray expenses of the public service is required for a period not exceeding the first 4 months of the following fiscal year, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council may, upon the recommendation in writing of the board, order that a special warrant be prepared for signature by the Lieutenant-Governor for the issue of the amount estimated to be required." That's section 28(3.1) of the *Financial Administration Act* under which we requested, not the four months of Supply but two months of Supply, April 1 to May 31.

Mr. Speaker, we have brought that bill forward as indicated. The reason why there are actually two bills is the special warrant, of course, was done while the House was not in session. It was actually dissolved and therefore we used the provisions under the *Financial Administration Act*. It's very important that government operations including payroll and income support and other expenditure obligations such as the calling and awarding of tenders, which is very important, as well as the annual contractual obligations are able to move forward in that period.

The Interim Supply bills will have no incremental impact on government's financial position in '21-'22 beyond what will be included in budget 2021.

Interim Supply does not allow government to make new spending commitments or introduce new programs. Really, any new funding initiatives beyond normal business will require a budget vote or special votes in the House of Assembly.

As I said, Mr. Chair, the Interim Supply number one amount, April 1 to May 31, is \$2,086,721,900. Following this particular discussion and debate, Mr. Chair, all things being equal, we'll get to the next bill, which will be Interim Supply from June 1 to July 31, Mr. Chair. That will be allowing us to continue while we debate the budget.

Now, these numbers are based on 2020 numbers that were debated, discussed, reviewed through the Estimates process here in the House of Assembly. It is very important to know that the scrutiny and review of those numbers have been done as recently as November – or leading into November, really in October.

Interim Supply bill, number one – special warrant, I'll use that term – is to ratify the amount that was approved during the special warrant, during the election process, in line with the intent of the *Financial Administration Act* that all appropriations be approved by the House and the Legislature, again, reminding everyone it is only for a two-month period. I think that is important for people to understand. We took the smallest amount of time possible under this special warrant, hopeful that we would get back into the House to do the Interim Supply bill No. 2.

Mr. Chair, I think it's important that we note that the first Interim Supply bill, of course, at the beginning of any fiscal year is usually higher than any subsequent bills. I will note that this one is higher than the second bill put before you. Why is that is that the majority of funding, as I said in my opening remarks, is for not just payroll and income support, but also for any tenders that need to be called or any contractual obligations. That is under the *Financial Administration Act* to ensure that can occur.

I will point out a couple of things that I think people will understand. When you look at this in its totality, the whole four-month period, the highest amounts are attributed to health care, for example, transportation and infrastructure and education. That is some of the major spending that occurs. Health care is always the highest level of expenditure and transportation and infrastructure, because of the requirement of contracts for large-scale infrastructure projects. Of course, education is required as well to ensure that we are doing things appropriately and properly for the educating of our citizens and how important our youth and our moving forward.

Again, please note, Interim Supply has no incremental impact on the province's financial position in 2021-22 beyond what will be included in budget 2021. It is simply to advance on funding for the upcoming budget. It allows government to continue normal, day-to-day operations while the new budget is being debated in the House. No new funding requests or new budgetary items that are not approved by the House are included in Interim Supply. It is based on a percentage of funding previously approved in *Budget 2020*. When budget 2021 – all things being considered – is approved, the amount allocated through Interim Supply will be deducted from the amount required through the main Supply bill. So it is not incremental, it actually replaces.

Mr. Chair, I think that is sufficient to say. There are two bills. I've given the amounts, I've given the rationale as to why and I've given the appropriate sections under the *Financial Administration Act*. I'll certainly listen to debate and answer any questions that I may be able to answer; then, looking at the next Interim Supply bill for the next period, being June 1 to July 31, which will allow us time then to have a budget and have it debated in time to rest the Interim Supply bill so the operations of government can move forward.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this to the House.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is indeed a privilege and a pleasure to speak during this Interim Supply debate. On behalf of the people of Stephenville - Port au Port, who I was elected to represent here in the people's House, I want to thank the people of Stephenville - Port au Port for the honour, the privilege and the confidence they have shown in me to re-elect me as their MHA.

I have always said it and I'll say it again: I will always put people before politics. Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, putting people before politics was not clearly evident during the past election, when despite having options, the Premier chose politics over people. His words still echo throughout the election. He told the people of the province it was his decision and his decision alone on whether to call an election. The Premier rolled the dice and lost. Yes, he has a small majority, but not the majority he dreamed about and thought was possible.

A lot of good people put their names forward in the last election to represent people in different areas of this province, but they were unsuccessful in their bid. The biggest losers in this last election were the people of the province who lost the opportunity to vote.

An election is a time where people are supposed to get to choose who will speak for them and advocate for them in the Legislature, where important decisions affecting their lives are made. It is imperative that we ensure elections are held properly and people's constitutional rights to vote are respected, because nothing is more fundamental in a democracy than a citizen's right to choose their representative.

We are not just 40 individuals – 39 at the moment – but we are the voices of the thousands of people in our province. When we speak, we are giving voice to those we represent. Every Member deserves to be heard. Every Member's views ought to be respected in this Chamber. We must treat one another with respect.

Debates here will be vigorous and contentious. That is necessary considering what's at stake. The decisions we make here or fail to make here affect people's lives in profound ways. They can affect whether people have jobs, or enough

money to live on, or enough food to eat, or proper access to health care when they need it, or quality education, or basic services like drinking water and safe roads, or protection from crime or a bright future for their children. So if we get passionate, it's because the people we represent are very passionate about these issues.

In his response to the Throne Speech, the Premier stated: "... two roads have emerged, but we must decide collectively which path we take. We can either get bogged down in the day-to-day rhetoric of the status quo, or we can all stand united against the menace in front of us: our economic crisis and what it means for the people of the province." We certainly do stand united as a province in wanting to raise Newfoundland and Labrador from the crisis we face, but where we sometimes differ is on how we would do that.

Our party has taken a strong, bold position that we need to grow our way out of this crisis by focusing on getting people working. Local jobs, local benefits, local economic activity and growth – local means here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Local also means in every region so the benefits flow fairly to all of our communities and people and no one is left behind.

Now, it certainly sounds like the government has come around a little bit towards our position, because the talk of deep cuts have been replaced by more measured languages and we are starting to hear talks of local benefits. Talk is not enough. Talk is worthless unless it delivers results and it is the government that bears the responsibility for delivering. Only one party governs. If you are serious about standing united, then you need to do your part to drive collaboration by opening up the books, show us the fiscal forecast; don't hide the information behind a veil of – quote – Cabinet confidence; don't bury reports that people need to be seeing; don't delay access to information responses; don't force us to go down that route at all. Lay the information down proactively; embrace openness and transparency; bring the facts to all-party forums so we know what's going on; listen to our input. Let us have a part in contributing to legislation before it comes to the House as a – quote – done deal, where it is very difficult, if not impossible, to properly amend. This is

especially true for election reform legislation. We need to be at the table collaborating on this long before the amendments reach the floor of the House of Assembly.

Your government was elected to govern, not just for the 22 districts in which you have Liberal Members but for the entire province. What is good for the District of Stephenville - Port au Port is good for the province, and what is good for the province is good for the Stephenville - Port au Port District.

We challenge you, if you are serious about standing united then do your part. If you fail or refuse to do a better job of collaborating, we will call you out on that and hold your feet to the fire because that's our job.

Oppositions are often faulted for being too critical. As our leader made clear on day one: we are critics because it is our role. The people elect a government to govern, they also elected an Official Opposition to serve an adversarial role, just like in a court of law. Nothing is perfect and our job is to scrutinize, ask tough questions, point out flaws, offer alternatives and try to make your initiatives better. So respect our role; take this parliamentary forum seriously.

If everything in our province was going well, it would still be important for us to serve as adversaries to the government here in this Chamber, but everything in our province is not going well. A province overflowing with resources, opportunities and skilled and determined people is not living up to its potential. People are hurting.

Obviously, government policies are not working as they should, so it is imperative that we do an even more vigorous job of critiquing your approach and offering suggestions. Standing united for our province does not mean rubber-stamping every initiative the government brings forward. If we are truly united in our resolve to see this province grow stronger, then we will do our jobs as an Opposition even more earnestly. We will double down on our efforts because that is the best way that we can contribute to getting this province on its feet and growing.

When we offer criticisms, do not accuse us of getting bogged down in the day-to-day rhetoric

of the status quo. When we raise day-to-day issues on behalf of the people, we do so because they are important to the people. Do not dismiss any of these issues. Do not show disrespect for any of our questions, we ask them for a reason. In fact, we could raise questions and issues in Question Period for hours each day and still not exhaust all the concerns brought to us. It's always a struggle to narrow down our questions to the short time allocated.

We will do our best to be respectful of ministers as individuals, but we will be holding your feet to the fire. That should not make any minister uncomfortable; you ran for this role and accepted your position knowing that you would be held accountable.

James Freeman Clarke was an American theologian and author who lived in the 1800s. He stated, and I quote: "The difference between a politician and a statesman is that a politician thinks about the next election while the statesman thinks about the next generation." Those words are still true today.

Let all 40 Members of this 50th Assembly work hard and commit to becoming stateswomen and statesmen and not simply politicians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is great to be back here in our hon. House of Assembly. I'd like to congratulate and welcome all new Members, of course. I would like to, of course, thank the people of the beautiful district of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. It certainly has been a long winter, but, needless to say, there's lots of work to do so I'm certainly happy to be back here in this hon. House.

I also want to take this time as well, Mr. Chair, to commend and thank the women who stepped forward. I think it's the most in history, the most women candidates that we've had run for every

party in all 40 districts, so that certainly deserves applause and recognition. There are nine women represented here in the House of Assembly, of course. There's much more work to be done, but, again, thank you and to commend those women who did step forward, of course, and gender-diverse individuals who stepped forward for this provincial election.

Again, a big thanks to Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, the people there. This is my third general election. Time flies, who knew back in 2015 – this is our third election, but, needless to say, I'm very grateful for the support that the people continue to show me. It certainly is a great honour and privilege, every time we stand in the House we're representing the people who put us here. I always say, every time I stand, how important it is to remember that, Mr. Chair. It's much bigger than the 40 people here in the House of Assembly, we're representing the entire province. I always keep that near and dear to my heart in everything I say and do in my position as MHA and now minister.

I'm very excited and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to be the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality. I'm very grateful to the Premier that he has recognized the importance of making this a stand-alone portfolio.

As we know, and as I've said, much work has been done, but we need to do much, much more to advance the matters facing women and girls and gender-diverse individuals.

At this time, I also want to thank the ministers who came before me in this portfolio for their good work. I intend on certainly working with them to build on the work that needs to be done and, of course, apply a gender-based analysis lens to every program and policy and everything that will be developed and generated by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, to apply that lens and, of course, mitigate the impacts that historically have been there facing marginalized groups and women and girls.

Just to talk a little bit about my district as well; very exciting news, which I think I started way back at the beginning – it was one of the very first priorities that I talked about often here in the House of Assembly, inside and out – is the

need for the replacement of the long-overdue Coley's Point Primary School.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: My colleagues, as you can see, Mr. Chair, still support me on this every time I talk about it – \$16.2 million was awarded to replace this aging facility. I'm happy to say we're near completion and, hopefully soon, ready to move in this year.

It's a beautiful building. It's located adjacent to Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts on Eric Dawe Drive. The people out there, the school community, the parents, the students, the educators, everyone as a whole, even in our neighbouring communities, of course, are very excited about moving into this brand new, state-of-the-art facility.

I had a tour just recently, but now I can't wait to get in there, of course. We see that new facility in there. It is very, very exciting. Again, our government certainly came through on that commitment. We all knew; it was promised years ago, but finally it has happened, and we can actually see the results. It's a big, beautiful, bright, colourful building, and I simply cannot wait. Again, I want to thank the people there who made this priority known to me, as an MHA, back then. Again, \$16.2 million.

Of course, roadwork, we all know it's that time of year, Mr. Chair. We have a small but mighty construction window to get the much-needed roadwork done throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The Harvey Street project was also a huge priority made clear to me by residents in my district, in particular the Town of Harbour Grace. Phase 4 has been complete. We've worked together with the federal government, as well, of course, our provincial government and our municipalities to make that happen. Phase 4 is complete, and now we're waiting for Phase 5 to begin. We're just waiting on some good updates on that.

As we know, we collaborated with my colleague, MP Ken McDonald, the member for Avalon, the federal member, as well as the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, which has been very supportive. I look forward to seeing that work getting started on that very,

very busy, historic street actually, Harvey Street, Route 70 of the Conception Bay Highway. Prior to the Veterans Memorial, it was the only way to get through, to take your excursion around the bay in our very historic and strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. So I look forward to that.

Also, it is National Volunteer Week here in our beautiful country. I want to take this time as well to thank the people, to thank all of the volunteers. As all know here – and we can all appreciate across every district, every organization – I think it's safe to say that our volunteers are indeed the most valuable assets. Would you all agree? I think so; certainly, a big thanks.

That leads me into, of course, we're gearing up – COVID did put a little bit of a break on the Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games, which is slated for Bay Roberts and the surrounding communities to host in the Conception Bay North region. We were supposed to host this summer past there last year but, unfortunately, COVID had other plans. I am told, and the commitment has been made, that we will host in Bay Roberts the next Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games.

Significant money, more than \$200,000 and counting, to go in for infrastructure for wellness. That's also a huge priority of this Premier and this government, to not simply receive treatment but to achieve wellness in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Chair, as we know, there's always much more room for improvement with regard to wellness. Statistics prove that across the county, with regard to diabetes in particular, we have the highest rates here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm happy to see that there is a commitment to doing just that, to getting us where we need to be, to be healthy and to build upon those good health practices and vitality. Lots of priorities there for that with regard to the infrastructure for the Summer Games.

I will say that another priority that has been made clear to me is to establish a wellness centre in the Bay Roberts and the immediate area, to have a year-round pool, because that's something that we need here in the area. We live in an expanding area in the District of Harbour

Grace - Port de Grave, so lots of good things happening, of course.

Again, I would be remiss if I didn't mention our volunteer firefighters, the men and women who run into those burning buildings and structures in emergencies of all kinds when the rest of us are seeking shelter. A big hats off to them for what they do. I think it's safe to say that we all sleep easier at night knowing they are there ready to answer the call 24-7, Mr. Chair. A big thanks to our emergency first responders across the board.

Also, I want to touch on some budget highlights for the Office of Women and Gender Equality in *Budget 2020*, supports for women and girls. An additional \$425,000 in funding to advance the work of the office of the status of women, including the development of a Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity and the expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program; very important initiatives and priorities. Mr. Chair, \$3.2 million in operational funds for women-serving organizations. I will say I can't wait to get out there, get on the ground and meet with the stakeholders because, Mr. Chair, those people are the experts in the community. I'm happy to say that the partnership is so strong, which I am learning about as taking on this new role and the co-operation in conjunction with our federal government as well.

Of course, we're all eagerly awaiting the budget, which is going to be brought down today, which I understand is going to be very focused on a COVID recovery with a special focus on women and girls, gender-diverse individuals and child care. As we all know and as we've all learned, it's very important, especially coming out of COVID.

Mr. Chair, on that note I will take my seat. My time is winding down again. It's very good to be back here in the House of Assembly. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have made it clear; they've spoken. They want us to continue this very, very important work that we're doing.

I'm confident in this Premier and this team. It's the right time; it's the right team. That said, I look forward to working with every Member in this hon. House. I respect you all.

Congratulations on your re-election. I look forward to working with you all.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll echo my colleague from the Official Opposition with regard to the election. In a way, a budget, like an election, is very much about serving the needs of people, all people in this province regardless of their abilities, that they all have a say. Yet, we know that in the election – and I'll have more to say on this as we debate the private Member's resolution and the budget in general.

There are many people left out in this election. Many of the same people who were left out in the election are also left out of the economy. There are many of those. I would say we've all encountered the constituents who tell us: I don't vote. I'm not voting, period. In many ways, that's probably music to the ears of any politician looking to get elected or re-elected because it means that if they're not voting for anyone, they're not voting for the competition either, but it shouldn't be that way. Everyone should vote and everyone should have a reason to vote.

Yet, we've heard enumerated here in the House the many examples of people who were unable to vote because of, sometimes, the lack of education, the lack of mobility, the lack of access to even a phone in the house, lack of connectivity, computer devices and so on and so forth. In many cases, these are also the people who may very well find themselves not able to participate in the economy or to thrive in this setting.

I notice that the big word, "consultation," factors largely here. Even in the Throne Speech it was noted, Mr. Chair, that we need "to put aside our partisan issues and commit to work together" to put the good of the province first. I would like to remind this house that we had that opportunity prior to the election in a minority government to

work together. We passed two budgets, Mr. Chair, in a minority government and in each case, it would have been easy enough, in a non-confidence, to vote against them and bring the government down. We chose not to because it was in the better interest of our constituents, of the people of this province.

What we had hoped for and what I firmly believe – and I've said this in my opening comments previously – I don't believe any one party, person or individual leader has the answers to how we're going to resolve the issues, but I do believe working together, we do. That was what was on the table beforehand.

I know there were some things in the budget that were there that we liked; others that we didn't. We didn't get everything that we would like to see but there was a movement forward. I think there was an opportunity to continue without an election in the middle of winter, during a pandemic, when we could have had the Moya Greene report in front of us, when we could have had a fulsome debate, when we could have found out where each party and each Member stands on this and where we could have moved forward, I think, with something that was rare and wonderful, that would have been something constructive. People then, when the election did come, would have had the opportunity to decide where they stand and who they wished to vote for.

Nevertheless, we had probably the longest election in the history of our province and probably the history of our country. Consider this: the cost of a mail-in ballot was anywhere from \$15 to \$25. That's the price of the election, and then still people didn't get – it'll be interesting to see what the total cost was. You cannot put a cost on the democratic process; however, the fact is that if we had this at a time when people were vaccinated, when the weather was better, I would put it to you that we would have saved much more money on this and we could have put that money towards other priorities and challenges facing us.

On the topic of priority, let's take a look at the small business that I referred to in my Member's statement. It was a small business that proceeded with a small family loan and support from Nidus Development, yet they went that route because

there was no government money available for small businesses during a pandemic to start up and there was no bank funding. Now, think about this – here’s a sure bet –to me, if we’re going to look at an engine for the economy, it’s about driving the small businessperson, the small entrepreneur.

They have created something that has a multiplier effect with all businesses around them, yet they could not get the government’s support. I won’t go through them at this point in time, but we know the number of large corporations that have received government funding only to shut down operations or to receive government support. If anything else, I’m looking at these small businesspeople that are revitalizing a neighbourhood in my district and need the support – if we talk about priorities.

Secondly, minimum wage: I think somewhere down the line we have to start having that conversation about minimum wage, because if you want to resolve the issues of poverty and that, put more money in people’s pockets. It’s interesting, I often hear people talking about: How can you get anyone to work at a job when they’re getting CERB? Well, let’s flip it around. Maybe it’s because we’re not paying them enough to incentivize going back to work. It’s pretty bad that when CERB or the government measures are looking better.

I can tell you the housing issues in my district are the result of years of neglect. I called once regarding a block of houses in my district where they actually got an extra tenant because a woodpecker or a starling has managed to pick its way through the rotted wood, a housing unit, to make its home there. I don’t know if it’s paying rent, but I can tell you right now, it’s been basically this neglected for, I would say, decades.

Health care for seniors: I don’t know how many I’ve received lately where the Department of Health has become more of a collection agency than a caregiving institution. It’s interesting that in the Throne Speech it refers to “the social determinants of health, making affordable, fresh, healthy and nutritious local food choices accessible to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is a priority of My Government.”

Well, then, I can tell you that’s the biggest problem when a two litre of Pepsi is cheaper than a two litre of milk; when we have those who are on income support who lost it because they applied for CERB; who, at the same time, when they were receiving CERB, the access to food banks dropped significantly. Why? Because people had money for the first time to actually put food on the table, decent food.

Then there’s education. The issues I hear from both teachers and parents alike, even during COVID-19, is the concern that basically the measures are being tailored to a budget, not necessarily to what they need to keep the school safe, Mr. Chair.

You’ve heard me say this before – and I’ll elaborate on it more later – if anything, if we’re going to make budget-based decisions then we will never work our way out of the problems that face us. We will never put decent food on the tables of people who need it. We will never end up supporting the small-business people who need it. We’ll never end up supporting seniors who are concerned with whether they can live in their home or not. If there’s anything, Mr. Chair, we need to be focused on now in determining priorities: What do the people need to thrive? Put aside the zero-based budgeting and budget-based decision-making.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Mr. Chair, just for the information of the House, in the bill that was distributed a little earlier, there was an error in the typing. The Clerk, I think, and the House officials are going to distribute a new copy that corrects the error.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank all the people of the Harbour Main District. I am truly humbled by their support, their trust and their confidence in me in re-electing me to be a Member of the House of Assembly in the 50th General Assembly. It's really a privilege for me and I take this responsibility so very seriously.

There are many things I've learned from this election, and I'll be speaking about it as well later on this week, some of the concerns that I have, but I'm going to speak right now more about the positive. I think that has to do with the connection that I felt going door-to-door through this long 10-week campaign. No doubt, it was rough, it was challenging, the uncertainty of the entire election, not only for the candidates but for the voter. At the ground level I have to say that I heard many concerns about the election and about the whole process. It was very troubling and very upsetting and stressful for many people.

One thing that I think is important at this time is to look back at the last 13 months. I think the reason we need to take this as an opportunity to reflect on what happened in terms of the COVID virus. That's perhaps the most important, pressing issue and concern that I heard from the people in the District of Harbour Main.

We all will agree that it was unprecedented, it was an unnerving – and still is an unnerving – experience. But we all want to get past these difficult last 13 months and we want to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We do know that the vaccinations are rolling out, although I would argue they are rolling out quite slowly. I've heard concerns from my constituents about that very fact. We need to see more people getting the vaccine quicker so that we too can build an immunity, like other jurisdictions that have far more than we do, which is, I understand, about 20 per cent of our population.

Getting back to the COVID virus, I think it's important that we reflect on what this year has taught us. I think by looking back on the past year and learning from that we will then be able to go forward and deal with the many pressing

issues that are facing our province. The pandemic itself has had an extraordinary effect on our lives, on each one of us here and our constituents that we represent in the entire province.

During the campaign, I had the opportunity to hear from many people when knocking on hundreds of doors throughout the district, especially in the first three weeks when we were able to do that before the variant hit. I guess what I mostly heard was about the loss that has been felt by the people that we represent. I'll give some examples just to put it in perspective.

I spoke to women who couldn't be, for example, with their daughters who were giving birth to their grandchildren. They couldn't be there to give the support they wanted to be able to give, but were unable to do that. I've spoken to husbands that weren't able to be there through the entire process in the hospital while their wives were giving birth – and not being able to be there, the pain of that loss.

I've listened, as well, to daughters and sons who have spoken with such sadness and regret that they have not been able to visit their parents and grandparents in the long-term care facilities. I also spoke with another lady who sadly couldn't really be with her mother. She was there at the last moments of her death, but it was too late for her to be cognizant of the fact that her daughter was there. That was very painful speaking with that woman and that constituent who was not there for her mother.

Families have had to make painful choices to postpone funerals, for example, of loved ones because of health restrictions. That's the reality. It's so sad. I know from personal experience myself, a dearly loved family member passed away during the election. We weren't able to have a funeral for her or be with our huge family to share in the grief and the sadness and to comfort one another.

Mr. Chair, these have been difficult times, there's no question. Annual trips that people have had scheduled to visit family and friends have had to be postponed. We can say that FaceTime is okay, but it just doesn't cut it. I've heard from constituents who were aggrieved by the fact that they could not gather as a

community of faith and worship in their particular religion. Even going to buy food at your local grocery store and buy necessities has raised the anxiety levels of people in the district.

Mr. Chair, at the heart of all of these hardships, I guess one thing we've recognized is that we are all aware that we're vulnerable, we're defenceless and it's okay to recognize and acknowledge those feelings. The threat that has been posed by COVID-19 is going to pass. We are winning and will win that battle. Just the simple act of wearing masks, washing our hands, physically distancing and, yes, the vaccine: those things will get us through this disease that we face. We also should not forget the people who have died from the virus and those people who have lost family and friends.

Mr. Chair, when I speak about COVID-19, I think it's important because we need to put it in perspective. It shows our vulnerability, but it also shows the immediate concern that our people that we represent face. They are also concerned about the plan and about jobs. They need to see that this province and this government have a clear, strategic economic plan. Mr. Chair, this is a concern. It's a big concern that is out there.

Has our government contracted out this job of developing the economic plan to someone else, to Moya Greene? The job of Moya Greene was supposed to be twofold: it was to address the immediate fiscal challenges and to come up with a growth plan. But we still haven't seen that, Mr. Chair, so that's a real concern. What I say, when I say it's a concern and that we haven't seen it, goes to the issue of transparency. That's an important theme that I think we have to focus on and we need from our government. This has to be a government for the people.

Transparency, Mr. Chair, is more than a buzzword. It means people in our province have a right to know and understand what is happening, especially when decisions are being made that impact their lives in such a significant way. When we do not know as of yet what our economic plan is, that is very concerning. We need to see that the government has been thinking clearly and has been getting our economy growing and getting people working.

I'm concerned when I read the Throne Speech; we heard it, that it was quite vague. We need to understand where we are going with this. People want more information about the government's plan, Mr. Chair. One of those things, in order for us to have transparency, we need transparency. That will ensure accountability. Without those two features, I think we have cause for concern.

Mr. Chair, with those thoughts in mind, I would like to conclude.

Thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To begin, I'd like to reference that and congratulate my colleague, the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, who was elected to the Speaker's Chair. Congratulations also to the Member in the Chair, as we speak, for Baie Verte - Green Bay, who's a colleague and certainly a friend. Congratulations to you as well. Congratulations to everyone upon their recent election to this House of Assembly.

I know we say it a lot but we don't say it enough, and that's referencing and recognizing the Table Officers and those that make this House of Assembly function. We certainly say thank you for all that you do.

Individually, we all speak – and I'm speaking for myself, as in the last election we referenced our families. I am the same to say thank you to my family for their support. Family definitely is the core and the foundation of it all. Most, if not more important, would be to the constituents of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for giving me another term to represent them.

I take great pride in the job that I do and I'm sure others echo those thoughts as well. I look forward to the next four years in terms of working together for the betterment of the people of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and in my role as Transportation and Infrastructure Minister for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are talking today around Supply and money that we need to keep the lights on and, certainly, more importantly, to pay those that provide the service to us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There are a lot of departments that are listed here, from Tourism to Industry to Immigration to Fisheries. We say thank you to those employees that provide the valuable service to keep those departments functioning.

Mr. Chair, in terms of the election, we all know now that there's going to be a review, and it's needed. All I say about the election, the results of, to people in my district, I'll say now, it's over, there's a government elected, get on with the business of the day. I take that seriously in my role as MHA and as minister, I will do that and look forward to, as I said, to the next four years.

They say your past determines where you go in your future. So I say thank you to the Premier for giving me the opportunity to spend some time in Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. I had one of my friends say to me that when you went in to Fisheries we figured there was going to be a total focus now on the fishery, other than the other industries, but that was not my plan. I tried to provide a balance, but I did say that the fishery definitely was important to me. It still is and will be; I know, too, my colleague who's in that department now.

Just recently, I'm hearing stories in my district about good crab prices and the catch rate is up there. We're expecting the same thing for lobsters. So the news that we have a higher price in crab shows confidence and, hopefully, it follows for other species in the fishing industry as well, and just the importance of the traditional fishery.

I had many sit-downs with inshore fishermen in my district during the election and always take pleasure in those conversations. We need to continue to support the inshore fishermen, I know the current minister has in his district as well, and we have them in a lot of districts across this province. We need to listen to them and whether it's the Atlantic Fisheries Fund that I heard from some inshore fishermen that is helping them, but they need more help. We need to listen to them.

I want to reference quickly the aquaculture industry. There are a lot of benefits in my district from the cage building to other inside industries benefiting the towns around and certainly the district as a whole. The previous speaker talked about jobs. There are jobs in this industry and there is potential for more. If we want to talk about jobs, that's a directive right there in terms of creation of more. I know we need to have a balance around the aquaculture industry and we're doing that.

Forestry: definitely important, certainly to Central Newfoundland in terms of the resource. Agriculture: I visited many farmers during my time there. It was important to them to hear and see the minister responsible visiting their farms and they thanked me for that. It is all about increasing our food security footprint and it is listening to them, listening to the stakeholders. I believe listening to the stakeholders is crucial to proper planning, whether that be fisherpersons, fish plant workers, farmers, forestry workers, whatever the case may be, listening will make for proper planning. I look forward, as I said to my colleague who is now there, he will continue on to do the great work.

I do have a few minutes left and I'd like to say thank you to the Premier as well for giving me the confidence to be in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. I know it is a big department and it effects a lot that goes on in this province. We can't over signify the importance of our roads, as we all know, and certainly the importance of our infrastructure.

Just this past week, I had the privilege to be part of three announcements – two of them with MP Hutchings and some mayors on the West Coast, we announced dollars for some towns on the West Coast. Some of them were small in scope but we all know sometimes small projects make a big difference for those communities.

Also last Friday, for the Eastern part of the province, with Minister O'Regan and the mayor of St. John's and others, we announced some other projects, some that included accessibility for people with disabilities, which is very important. I'm proud to be a part of that.

Today, we will hear and find out what's in the federal budget and that's certainly important, not

just for my department but for all departments in this government and for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We look forward to that because I think more now than ever we have to recognize that partnership is crucial, most important and we need to work together to get through COVID-19. It's not just a provincial problem or a Canadian problem, it is a world problem and so it's going to take world solutions. We're moving forward and people are becoming more confident. They're getting vaccinated and we look forward to the day where we can all clap and be happy about the fact that we're back to somewhat normal.

In terms of Transportation and Infrastructure, Mr. Chair, I want to talk about just a couple of the priorities, I guess, in the department that I look forward to working on those files, and that's certainly the new mental health and addiction facility. I can't speak enough to it. It's not just about the facility but the services that it will provide. I heard many times in my district during this election and over the last many, many years about the challenges that face families and individuals in terms of mental health. I look forward to supporting them through a new building, but more important, what's going in that building to support them.

My time is up. I just want to say it's been a pleasure to speak again. I look forward to the other speakers forthcoming.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to spend a few minutes to speak on the Interim Supply. First of all, as we all do, I welcome everybody here, all the old hands and the new ones that were elected in the House of Assembly. It is a privilege. There are only 40 of us in the province that have that privilege and right, so congratulations to everybody who ran and got elected.

Of course, I would like to thank the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, Mr. Chair, once again

for placing their trust in me in the election and representing their issues and concerns. It's always a pleasure. You never take it for granted and you never take it lightly.

I just want to thank them, Donny Johnson and the same campaign team that we had since 1989; the same campaign team and still the same campaign manager. Just a long-term friendship with a lot of people and I just want to thank all of them for all of their support on both sides of the Bay of Islands and in the Curling and Humbermouth area.

Mr. Chair, I just have to recognize last week, the last eight or 10 days, there was a bit of a scare out in Western Newfoundland about COVID. I think a few Members mentioned earlier about the anxiety for people. I was reached out to by the Premier and the chief of staff and we worked together to help ease the tension, get testing done and get press releases out. I just want to recognize the Premier and the chief of staff, Peter Miles, for reaching out to me. We're all working together to help the residents.

I also want to thank the staff of Western Memorial who helped out, the town council of Meadows who supplied their town, and all the residents and all the people within two hours. I think there were 1,400 people that phoned in wanting to get tested to ensure that their community was safe all throughout. To all hands, a great job. To the government itself who handled it in a professional way, hopefully we'll learn a bit the next time if there's a bit of an outbreak, that we can have a live press briefing because of it. I have to say that it helped a lot. There were a lot of concerns and I just want to recognize that, Mr. Chair.

We're here debating now Interim Supply. I know I wrote the minister on it, on Interim Supply, and I got a reply back today. I thank the minister for that. This is the first time that you get a special warrant that's approved again in the House to be transferred over to Interim Supply. The minister is saying that is the spirit and intent of the act but just explain. When you get a special warrant, what you need the money for you have to table within three days when the House is open – what projects it is for; in this case, the subheads. If there's any extra money, you table it.

I know the minister and staff wrote me, and I can only go on with the intent. What we're doing now is that the government put in Interim Supply for what they thought was necessary, and now we're going to approve what they put in through the special warrant. Usually when Interim Supply comes in, we get the subheads; we get what the money is for. I understand there were some upfront costs with it through Transportation and Infrastructure, but through special warrant, we should have a copy of that if we allow the special warrant to go through. If we approve this Interim Supply, then we're just saying we're giving it to each subhead. I just want to put that on the record.

I have no reason to believe that is not the intent of the minister in the spirit of the act, as the letter said, but usually that's the difference between a special warrant and Interim Supply. Today, if we approve this, which I assume we are, then we're going to approve the special warrants that the government put in place that we never had an opportunity to see. I just want to put that on the record as a concern that I had.

The minister did respond. Her staff did respond in writing to that. I'm not here questioning anybody; it's just the process itself. If it is the spirit and intent, I'm fine with it, but I'll just explain the process. I've never seen it done before that way in this House in all my years. I just wanted to put that on the record.

During the election, one of, and probably the major thing I've heard, is the deficit. We all know the problems that are facing the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in a deficit. I know people saw the interview with Clyde Wells; I was around at that time. I remember I made this statement in the House several times before. It was in 1992 and there was an election coming up in 1993. Then, Clyde Wells at the time, as the premier of the Province, was going to have – we made path of deficit reduction and we're going to continue.

Everybody on the Liberal side was saying we're going to lose the election. Clyde Wells – I remember going across to Gilliams and I mentioned to him what people's concerns were. His quote was: Eddie, I'd rather lose the election with honesty than win with dishonesty. Clyde Wells went on with his plan. He went out and

told everybody: Here's why we have to do it. Here's our plan we're going to do. In 1993, he won more seats than he did in 1989 for the deficit reduction plan.

It's a big issue. If you had the interest – and if people in this House ever think – on your house that you paid on your house, the interest on your house is more than any other expenditure you have, except for health care. It can't last. It just can't last. I understand the situation that the government is in, but I think we have to sit down as a province and find some way to try to work out a plan. Probably not do it in two or three or four or five years, but set up a plan so that we can give it to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, give it to them in a responsible way and say here's what our concerns are, here's what we're planning on doing.

There are going to be some people who are going to be upset. Members in this House every day – every day that we're going to be in this House, there are going to be Members going over and speaking to ministers in government and saying we have an issue in the district. We're going to be no different from every ordinary citizen in this province. That's the issue of being in governance, but that's the issue for us also to realize that we can't get everything we want. If we did, every cent from Transportation and Infrastructure for roads could be spent in any rural district here in this province, either one.

We have to be able to work together. I heard the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port talking about how we all have to work together. A good example was last week with the Premier, the chief of staff, the Department of Health and Western Health, how it can be done when we all come together for the right reason.

I'm just hoping that we can look at the deficit as a right reason that we all need to come together, because it is a major, major concern for a lot of residents in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have no problem with working with the government, as I've shown in the past, to ensure that we do it in a way that's going to benefit all Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of course, during the election in Humber - Bay of Islands, the roads were an issue, but I know there was a fair amount of roads that were finally done last year, that was done when we had the major floods back in 2018. There was a lot of work done last year in Humber - Bay of Islands with the roads.

There are always concerns about health care and family doctors. We know, and I would say just about every district here are hearing from residents that we just can't get enough family doctors. What the solution is, I don't know – more recruitment to try to help out. But those are the issues that I've been hearing throughout the election. It is a real concern. I always hear the minister say that we have more now than before. That is probably true, but the issue is there are still some people without a family doctor. They're still raising concerns on it, so we have to try to strive to do a bit better.

With the water and sewer, that's always a big issue. I know with the departments of Environment, and Transportation and Infrastructure, they're always trying to make towns and give them better, safer drinking water and sewer, which would promote a lot of businesses in the area. Again, that's going to be contingent on the federal government also, because Newfoundland and Labrador can't do it on their own. We're going to need help from the federal government, who, again, are having their budget today. They have some of their own issues because of COVID.

We all recognize the drastic results from COVID on our economy, on people. We have to try to set the course so that we can get back on track and start getting that deficit down, but do it in a responsible and in a long-term way. As long as we get a plan and stick to it, I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will help out.

There's no doubt, Mr. Chair – and I've been here a long while – the Official Opposition has a major role to bring issues to the government. Many times, there's confrontation. I remember back with Beaton Tulk and a few more, when we'd be hearing – we'd go back and forth. Before it was over, we'd leave and go out and have a meal together. That's what we need. We need that spirit. We need that co-operation together.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be back again for another few words later.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I was listening very intently to the hon. Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. Just so that I can clarify, the *Financial Administration Act*, for the Member opposite and for those that may be questioning the sections of the act and how does this process of a special warrant work, there are actually two sections of the *Financial Administration Act*. One is section 28(2) which does allow for a special warrant and 28(2) is more for continuing service if you have insufficient funds, that's 28(2). The normal process is that you would have to table that within three days of the issue of the special warrant.

We've used section 28(3.1), I've read that into the record, and that section deals with when the House of Assembly is dissolved and you have to table your warrant then within 15 days and it will be tabled.

I will point out to the Member opposite and all Members that all the heads of expenditure – one of the reasons why we wanted to bring this to the House of Assembly, as Interim Supply, Bill 1, to replace the special warrant, is all the heads of expenditure are noted under the Schedule as well.

Mr. Chair, I would say that I think that we are meeting the spirit and intent of the *Financial Administration Act* ensuring that we have Interim Supply and the House of Assembly has the opportunity to discuss and review that Interim Supply to the end of May. Then, again, a second bill will be introduced following this one, Bill 3, that will go from the Interim Supply requirements for June and July.

Again, I remind those that may be listening to debate today, this is based on the *Budget 2020* that was debated last fall and approved in early November. It's for money only for those expenditures. This is not new money or new

expenditures at all. It does meet the requirements of the *Budget 2020* and does give this House of Assembly ample time to scrutinize and review, especially coming up to budget 2021-2022.

I will say, Mr. Chair, that the budget of 2020-2021, which is the year ended March 31 that we're dealing with here and the fact that we needed a special warrant because the House was dissolved at the time, certainly had the support of this House of Assembly – unanimous support of this House of Assembly.

I emphasize that while Newfoundland and Labrador is challenged financially because of some of the decisions that have been made over many, many, I would say decades, Mr. Chair, and the development of Muskrat Falls is included in those numbers, but we're in the middle of a global pandemic, so budget 2020-2021 did have supports in that budget, for example, for the Small Business Assistance Program, for the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program and the essential workers program. Those were funds that we made available to assist the province while we moved through the pandemic.

We also introduced \$25-a-day child care, and I think everybody in this House recognizes how important that is for families and how important it is for our economic abilities in this province. There is also money, \$609 million spent in infrastructure funding, and that is a tremendous investment; \$170 million for highways and for bridges; \$23 million for upgrades to existing health care facilities; of course, money again for construction of an adult mental health facility; new schools, we talked about Coley's Point, but construction of new schools in Gander and Paradise, Coley's Point and St. Alban's; and to advance a new correctional facility here in St. John's and of course one in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

We also spent, or are in the process of spending, \$400,000 to complete an engineering study into the scope of the replacement costs of the wharf in Lewisporte. So good, positive investments that were required throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I think the development and recently launched nurse practitioner virtual care

service through the 811 line was a good investment for this province.

I will say that coming into budget 2021-22, we will be looking at, of course, long-term plans of how we bring this province back to balanced budgets and how we take a longer-term approach to financial stability and really economic development. I think it's going to be incredibly important. Everyone in this province knows the financial challenges, everyone knows that we are carrying tremendous debt loads and that we are continuing to spend more than we receive in income. I think people are prepared to make decisions on what are important investments for the province and how we bring ourselves through that fiscal instability to really having a stable, strong, smart Newfoundland and Labrador going forward. I think that's kind of the vision of what I think everybody in this House wants to have for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just wanted to address the concerns raised by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. We are following the *Financial Administration Act*. We will be tabling it within the 15-day period, of course. It does speak to the difference to the insufficient requirements versus – which is in section 28(2) – what we're following, which is section 28(3.1), which is when the House of Assembly is dissolved.

I'll stop there; I know there are other Members who wish to speak to this very important Interim Supply bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I think we're all doing it, we would like to welcome all the new Members elected in this last election to the House. I know we have one new Member. I'm looking over across the way and I notice several of them. I want to congratulate each one of you.

Sometimes you take this for granted. We all know how hard it is to win an election. The

saying goes: It's hard to win an election; it's that much harder to get re-elected. From day one after you get elected to your next time is four years or whatever, every day that goes by is to get re-elected, and that's to do what your constituents elected you to do.

My only advice – and it's advice that was always given to me by a lot of wise people – never forget the people who put you there. When you go to the door, they elected you today, stay that same person when you go back in four years' time, whenever it is. Don't ever change who you are. No matter what role you may take in government, ultimately, it's for the betterment of the people that have elected you and the people of the province. I think that's the best piece of advice that can ever be given. It's something that I've taken with me and I continue to take with me, and it appears to work.

Mr. Chair, as I just said, the people of Conception Bay South have been very good to me. I can't thank them enough for giving the opportunity to come back in here as their representative once again. When I go around during election time, I have a unique perspective because I've lived there all my life and I know the district very well. It's a weird thing to say, but 90 per cent of the streets I go down, I know most everyone who lives on the street.

My wife goes with me sometimes knocking on doors, and she said: Do you really know these people that well? Actually, I've knocked the doors that often I actually know most people in the houses and I usually know what colour they are. I'll say they're Liberal, they're NDP or they're not with me or they don't vote. It's pretty scary, but actually ironically you get pretty good at this after a while. I'm sure a lot of Members in the House here can attest to the same thing.

One thing I always said when I went around, and I've noticed it again this time and people ask you: Oh, politics must be difficult or whatever. And it is difficult and it is challenging, but it's more challenging in trying to deliver, get answers and solve problems for people than it is for the backlash you get.

I know, on a personal level, I can't thank the electorate of Conception Bay South enough,

how they've treated me ever since I've been fortunate enough to be their representative. I don't face that. It is a very pleasant relationship; it's a kind two-way street.

I always say you get back what you put in and I put in. I'm a heart and soul type of person, but the people in CBS have been very good to me. It's more difficult – trying to please them is more my job than what flak I take, because they've been very kind to me and this past election they showed that once again. I can't thank them enough. As I've always said, it's a huge privilege; it's a huge honour.

It just came to my mind then, as a person here, it seems strange to be in this House without him. I know, Mr. Chair, you know who I'm going to talk about. He has a great replacement, but the former Member for Cape St. Francis, when I first sat in the House and was getting sworn in, in 2015, he was next to me and I was kind of in awe. On our side, I was the only new Member. I was looking across the way and it was all these faces, it was just a different experience.

He looked at me and said: you should never lose sight of where you are. This is very special. You're one of 40 people. Not many people get this honour. Enjoy it, take it in, appreciate what – you're a very lucky person. He was always a person of wisdom; I think we can all attest to that. He was the godfather of our caucus. We all looked up to him. He was always very respected.

Outside of missing him, I'd never forget. As time goes on during the session, there are lots of quotes I'll bring up from the former member because he was a breath of fresh air to us. He's missed but we have a great replacement. It is never bad to bring up good advice to everyone around, so it is a huge privilege.

Mr. Chair, we brought in a private Member's resolution today, which will be debated Wednesday. It is about the election. We all know about the election. It has been debated and debated and talked about, and will continue to be talked about. Unless we actually bring it out in the forefront, talk about it in the proper manner, and that is a transparent manner – this can't be about politics, this can't be about Tories, Liberals and NDPs again fighting, because people are tired of that.

I've said this many times in the House: People are getting tired about that stuff. Partisan politics is running thin with a lot of people. Sure, there are people running for different parties and have preferences and that. As time is going on, I don't know if you all realize it, when you go to the doors there are a lot personal votes now too. The red and the blue are not as strong as it used to be; there are a lot of personal votes. It is how you earn your right to be representing in this Legislature.

Sometimes if you go with trends, if you go with polls, we'd have 40 Liberals in here. That never happened because there are good people on this side of the House as well. Even with the popularity in the polls, the people still voted for independents, NDP and, of course, the Tories. To get to the bottom of this election, to solve the problems that happened during this election, unless we go in and throw everything out and we expose everything that's there, ask the questions, whoever that may be, whoever was involved, whoever had any input, these voices need to be heard.

We heard rumours. I've heard all these stories and I hope some of them are wrong. I hope some of them are what they are, just stories and no truth to them, but they're very disturbing. I can't say they're not factual. If someone is repeating it – you can turn on the radio some days and listen to *Open Line*. Some of the stuff I was hearing there was like wow.

I'm sure the stuff is stretched. I'm sure it's not all totally accurate, but people's faith in our electoral reform and our institutions is shattered. People don't trust anymore. We finished it off but lo and behold – last going off it was beyond. I don't know what stripe they were voting for. They called in and they took four votes over the phone. That happened. Our Chief Electoral Officer admitted to that. Yet two weeks prior, he told the national media that he'd be in the courts faster than you could turn your head. What were we doing? What was happening there?

Then, of course, the Chief Electoral Officer is going to take a lot of grief, but how did we end up there? Because we had an election called in the middle of January, in the middle of a pandemic that no one was prepared for. It is documented that the Chief Electoral Officer

asked the Premier to wait for 35 days at least to give him time; he said he went with 28. We wouldn't have gotten there if an election had not been called, so we wouldn't have been in that predicament. Really, the Premier deserves to share credit and blame on this too.

To go back to my original comment, we can blame and point fingers and all that, but I don't think the public want that. They want us to throw this on the table and get it all laid out. We're going to debate this on Wednesday and in the coming days. It will be long past Wednesday but that's what the public want. The public don't want this.

They go ahead with their electoral reform – no disrespect to the new Minister of Justice and Public Safety. Absolutely, they're going to do their thing. But even if that's done in a transparent manner, even if it's done better than we could ever do in a Committee form, the public won't believe it. You have to bring back confidence in the public. If that's done by a Liberal government, by a Liberal department of the Liberal minister, even if it's done fair, that's still the optics. Optics is everything. If you're in politics any length of time, you realize optics is everything.

I've been here at times and I know stuff has been done right above board – you go out and you flick on the news and you're getting a different twist on it – I know it was but the people of the public portray and interpret things differently. This is an important one because I believe that going forward, in a few year's time – whatever time – none of us will be here. It will be all new faces and all new people in these seats. But if you don't have faith in the institution and of all things your elections – one of the most sacred things in our world is elections, your right to vote.

I have a lady in my district; she's 96 years old. She's never missed an opportunity to vote. This election was the first one that happened. But I happened to be a witness when her information was called in. An Elections Canada official picked up the phone and they discussed it. They talked about her date of birth, her age and, my God, how wonderful that is and had a conversation and whatnot. Now, she was having trouble with her sight. I was there; I watched this

happen. I was a witness to this and I pleaded with Mr. Chaulk. She never got her right to vote. The information was lost. They checked everything and couldn't find it.

Now, I've heard hundreds of stories like this across from people. I have neighbours – people called in; they went online. We had problems with our systems. If you go and book a hotel room, you get a confirmation number. Anything you book, you get a confirmation number. I applied online and I didn't know for sure if I had a ballot until, finally, it came in the mail three weeks later. There was no record, just that you've been submitted. There's no follow-up. There's no record. That's a basic thing.

Were we prepared? No. Could we have been prepared? Yes. Did we have to go to an election when we did? No. So we're going to blame Bruce Chaulk on a lot of this stuff, and rightfully so, but we can't lose sight that the Premier, who had full authority, made that clear to the general public that he had the final say on this election. He needs to wear some of this too.

The bottom line is if we're going to restore confidence in our institutions, confidence back in our electoral system, that people can actually go mark an X and feel like what they've done is right and they're electing, they're getting what they asked for – because your government is very important. It's sacred in this province. It controls a lot of what we do in our daily lives and we have to do it right. Right now, I don't think, I don't personally feel that our system is right. I'm an elected Member, so how does the general public feel?

Mr. Chair, I'll finish up on that. I'll have a lot more time to talk about that in the coming days.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Further speakers to the resolution?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

No, I don't want to miss an opportunity to speak about what's going on in my own world, especially back in Lake Melville. I'd like to thank those people, now that I have a bit more time on the clock than I do on a petition, to say thank you very much to them. It was my third campaign and I must say it was a fascinating campaign to run as an independent. My theme was to provide an independent voice for the District of Lake Melville and I'm very happy for how that unfolded.

I think back, too – I've mentioned this in some media interviews, but if anyone listens to CBC on Saturday morning, there's an interesting show there with Terry O'Reilly. It's called *Under the Influence*. It's all about branding. It's fascinating that when you do something and go forward without a brand, how you can actually attract people who may have, in the past, been friends with myself, but because of any political affiliation was reluctant to come forward.

I had people from literally all stripes, some folks who were not even politically minded, come forward. So my biggest challenge in the election was handling the volunteers. I need to thank dozens and dozens of them, and how we built it was truly a fascinating exercise in a political pursuit. I say thank you to all of them.

My job is going to be to raise issues. I look forward to working very respectfully with government, with Opposition and with everybody in this Legislature and continue to work with the networks that we have developed over the last, now my sixth year within the various departments.

Often when you're speaking to a money bill you look back with an historical perspective and you say, well, we've accomplished this and we've accomplished that and so on, but I think as so many of us are alluding, this is really a critical time. In my mind, there are several themes that we really need to pay close attention to. I've heard the Premier speak to it, I've heard of other pundits and so on, when they look at Newfoundland and Labrador right now and they're talking about our situation – let's look this bill – the fiscal situation. As so many have said, when your second expenditure is interest payments on the debt that we've accumulated, we're in a heck of a predicament.

Unfortunately, I've heard that line now for the last six years, and while I believe we are making progress, the next big crisis that's faced us, that of the COVID-19 and this pandemic, has certainly thrown us into a tailspin.

Another big challenge, and we face it sitting in Labrador, I think, we face it also sitting in rural parts of Newfoundland, and that's the demographic challenge. How can we continue to provide the services we need to provide for all of the people in our province? They're all taxpayers, they all have a great affection and loyalty to this province, yet so many of them, because of where they are, because of where they live, frankly, are not able to avail of the services in the large centres, primarily in the Northeast Avalon, so we need to overcome that.

The other theme that I have been speaking about well before I got into politics, and I'm going to continue to talk a lot about it and I believe it is our fourth and I believe it is our most critical challenge that we are facing as a province, that is of climate change. This isn't just some nebulous entity that's out there and what it could mean for future generations. Well, guess what? It's the here and now and it's our current generation.

When I think about Lake Melville, for example, and if you recognize that the projections are that by 2050 – that's just a little under 30 years from now – the average temperature in the town that I call home, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, will be 6.5 degrees warmer than it is now – 6.5 degrees. It's just snow and ice conditions are gone. The calamity that this is going to cause all of us, and many of us are going to live to see this and it's going to be a frightening situation.

So as terrified as we are with our fiscal situation, with our demographic challenges, with this pandemic and the virus, we have a much bigger pressing issue. I look forward to, in my next four years, speaking – and I will be looking to use my own career before I got into politics and drawing on some of that expertise to bring some ideas to the table. I look forward to doing that.

With the time left, I want to talk about some of the key highlights I feel that we need to pay attention to today. Today, I did raise my first petition. I hope – as my ambition – to have a

petition every day. So please look to me when it comes to petition time, I will be ready for you and I will be there.

As I said today, the largest river in this province right now – it's some 826 kilometres long; it's more than double the next largest river – is in full flood. I shouldn't say it's in full flood, but it's bracing for it. The community has stopped traversing the river; the province has provided a helicopter shuttle. We have now several properties who again, and the people who live in them, don't know if their homes are going to be secure as this river breaks up and the flood comes along with it.

This is not a situation like other flood zones in the province where one can just get in their vehicle and move and/or perhaps build a little berm. We have a very precarious situation in Mud Lake and also in the lower part of the community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay where literally the backyards of some homes are eroding away because of the situation of the Churchill River. We need to get at that.

I've got a series of petitions – I'm going to introduce a new thought here, I've not spoken about this on this floor, but I am going to be looking for some help in the government. I know it's going to be tough to find the monies, but I can tell you, I can just ask anyone who perhaps doesn't spend much time in Labrador, if they could just imagine what it would be like to get in their vehicle and drive for five hours and know that there's no gas station, no washroom or no communication. Just try to put yourself in that perspective.

Well, that's what we do to drive from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to the next stop, which is in Port Hope Simpson. It's about a five-hour drive; it's hundreds and hundreds of kilometres. Situations have happened, we've had washouts and we've had accidents. Sometimes people just have to use the washroom. Guess what? You have no support there.

I'm going to be looking for from government – I'm aware of private sector proposals that are looking to establish washrooms, communications and other conveniences at locations, these could be solar powered, they could be sitting right beside the stations right

now at Cartwright Junction, Cache River and at Crooks Lake, which they could run independently. They could solve a lot of problems that we have when we're covering these remote distances in Labrador. It's great that we are making progress on connecting some of these communities, but we have to do it safely.

I've asked many people in the last several months would they mind giving up a kilometre of asphalt to make sure that these kinds of supports were in place and they said absolutely. I'm going to be talking in more detail about that but I did want to put that thought out there on the floor today.

Medical care and services are a struggle throughout the province, absolutely. They tend to be more and more accentuated as you get into more and more remote situations. In my last six years, I've watched people cancel appointments for cancer care. I've watched people who just can't afford to get out to or waiting in line.

I had a gentleman today that I'm going to be reaching out to the department about, I don't want to get into specifics of it but here's the situation where he's trying to get a medical examination so he can renew his driver's licence. The driver's licence department is not granting any further extensions for him to get this medical examination so he's stuck. He's actually facing a layoff because he can't get in to see a doctor to get a basic medical. Wow, it's really coming to some tough situations.

I guess the other one I want to talk about and I'll be raising it, so just a heads-up to the minister, that is Route 520. I will be talking about it tomorrow. It's a highway and I've had various Members of this Legislature drive that road. I'm not pleased to tell you that the state of it has further deteriorated such that this spring the locals are actually putting names on some of the holes and the dips and the airborne events that can occur, driving at the speed limit on that highway. This is the only artery between Sheshatshiu, North West River and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. That's how you get to your dialysis. That's how you get to the grocery store. That's how you get to the airport.

We have really put them in quite a situation. No question, the priority has been on completing the Trans-Labrador Highway and I thank everybody in all levels of government to get there, but I need this government to take a close look at 520. We had a strong commitment to ensure that that highway and that tender would start in June and I'm hoping that's the case.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Before I take the opportunity to introduce our next speaker, the hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, I feel as though I'm in an auction room. There are people giving me a nod and a wink and a raise of the hand. I will get to you. I apologize for not noticing you all the one time.

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Today, we are debating a bill, an Act Granting to Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service. Mr. Chair, for those watching at home, in very plain language, what that really means is that we are confirming our capacity as a government to continue on to offer core services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We need the majority of this House of Assembly, the elected MHAs, to agree to do this.

Now, all things being equal, I'm pretty sure that we all agree that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador need core services. This is an opportunity, Mr. Chair, for me, as the MHA for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, to talk about how important this is and how important *Budget 2020* is to the people of my district.

Budget 2020 supported such initiatives as a \$30-million Small Business Assistance Program to help offset expenses and innovation required to respond to COVID-19; \$25 million directed towards small business and \$5 million towards community-based organizations; 14 new drugs for the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program, and it expanded the Insulin Pump Program; and over \$200,000 for Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative.

Now, this is very important. Our seniors have really, really had a difficult time through COVID-19. COVID-19 has had a significant impact. I personally know the mental health impact of COVID-19 can have on any family. The week of my nomination race back in November, both my daughter and her husband were diagnosed with COVID-19. They live in Louisiana, so all we could do was offer them constant support through Facebook Live. I can tell you, it was not fun. It was a very, very difficult two weeks. We were lucky to have access to such technology. We thank God that they both have recovered and they're now getting ready to receive their second vaccine.

Every day in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair, we are getting closer and closer to having everyone who wants a vaccine, vaccinated. This is pretty good news.

Mr. Chair, more than \$170 million was allocated in *Budget 2020* for provincial highways and bridges, and \$16.4 million towards the construction of the adult mental health and addictions facility in St. John's. Mr. Chair, this is just a snapshot of what our government is doing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our government consulted with the residents of the province, we listened to those whom we represent and together we did come up with a plan based on what we, as a government, could successfully deliver with the best results.

Mr. Chair, this is my third general election and I need to just have a quick talk about the most recent election. It's my third general election and I've gone through three nominations; two in 2015 and one in 2021. I am telling you, I am welcoming the commitment to amend the *Elections Act, 1991*. There's one thing that I noticed during this general election that I did not notice in the prior elections and that was we experienced a significant amount of vandalism this time, vandalism to our signs and it was a violation of our personal property. Mr. Chair, signs do not vote and that was evident, signs do not vote. Again, I look forward to amendments to the Elections Act and I look forward to bringing it into 2021.

Most in the House of Assembly have heard me talk over and over and over about the Provincial Roads Plan and the importance of investing in road infrastructure. This year, in my district, we will see the continuation of paving and upgrading of the Markland Road. I expect, Mr. Chair, when that road is paved, I'll probably take a tent and go out and sit down and have a celebration; 6.1 kilometres in Placentia, the southeast area and the Dunville area are going to be receiving some upgrading this year.

Right now today, what's happening out there is we have a much needed and very long-awaited project happening in Dunville; that is Clarke's Pond to the Dunville water connection is happening. They're going to connect the three ponds and upgrade the pumphouse; very, very important infrastructure for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Infrastructure updates are critical to rural Newfoundland. We have amazing tourism commercials by our residents and our visitors. In the near future, our visitors will be back and once again we'll be welcoming them with open arms to Newfoundland and Labrador, so we need to be ready for them. Let's welcome them to Cape St. Mary's as they travel over an upgraded road.

I want to thank the government for investing in travel so that people can now safely travel down Salmonier Line and you can go on to St. Vincent's and enjoy the whales. It's safe for the motoring public. We have invested in a significant amount of infrastructure, but we do need to continue to do this.

I look forward to additional projects with budget 2021. There are so many roads in the district that need attention: Cape Shore, St. Joseph's to Admiral's Beach, Harbour Drive in New Harbour – just some examples, Mr. Chair. They need attention for the safety and the security of the motoring public. For the new people that are here, you're going to hear me talk about roads over and over and over until every road in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's is upgraded.

Mr. Chair, I believe in designing a model that will highlight the importance of sustainable communities and local governance. Having many municipalities and local service districts in

my district, I understand first-hand the importance of supporting infrastructure projects and working together to achieve these results. I was pleased to here that these ideas were brought forward in the Speech from the Throne. I look forward to working with this government to build on those ideas and provide the necessary modernization that our communities do need. Jurisdictional scans across Canada will show that such models do in fact exist.

There is economic development happening each and every day in Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, Mr. Chair, Argentia Gold is finally celebrating their grand opening. They are a local employer, a new employer, and I welcome them and I look forward to their growth. The Port of Argentia is a heavy industrial seaport located in Placentia Bay. It's formerly the site of the US naval base. Argentia is being redeveloped with a diverse group of port users and tenants involved in marine transportation, manufacturing, information technology, construction, some offshore oil, mining and other sectors. I anticipate some wonderful things for the port. I commend the board and the staff for their operational model.

Mr. Chair, a volunteer is a person who offers himself or herself for service or undertaking, a person who performs a service willingly and without pay. This is Volunteer Appreciation Week and I was blessed to have over 60 volunteers come forward for my campaign this time. They came out of the woodwork to help me and I was truly and honestly humbled by the support I received. I cannot thank them enough, along with my family and friends who, well, had no choice but to help me.

I just want to take this opportunity, as my time is winding down, to thank the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, to thank my constituents and thank those who supported me during election 2021 and have elected me for the third consecutive time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to be back again having another few words, and this time I'm going to speak, through Interim Supply, on the election itself.

Mr. Chair, this is not about me. People know the history of myself and Bruce Chaulk. This is about this institution and this House of Assembly. I can tell you it is about the institution, and a lot of times I've spoke and said we have got to protect the institution. I understand the government, they can't come out and say anything about Bruce Chaulk because then they're going to verify yes, there were issues with the election. That's why that's not done.

I will ask the question in this House to anyone that wants to answer it: If any of us Members here broke the act, how long would we have before someone is going to stand up and say: apologize and withdraw the statements? Yet, we're allowing the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to do that. Why are we doing it?

Is it because, okay, you won the election, everything is fine? Everything is not fine. I've seen the frustration. I've been through the frustration with people. I'll just give you one example. How many people in this House of Assembly can tell me how many days were the phone lines and the computer system down? All through that week when we had six, seven days to vote, how many times was the system down?

Do you know the toll-free number, it never even started until Sunday evening. It was supposed to start Friday; Saturday was going to be deep cleaning of the office, it never even started until Sunday night. Look at those times when people could have called in for a ballot and they couldn't call in.

Just to give you another thing that I brought forward – I put all this in emails to the Commissioner, when they changed the phone lines up to get Elections Canada to help out, I wrote him to say: Could you put in another toll-free number for outside the Avalon? Do you know what he wrote back and said? Tell them to phone the other line, the other line where people were on hold for two to three hours, would have to pay a long distance charge for two or three hours, and tax, to vote. We could not get a

second line put in for the toll-free number for people outside St. John's area; it's just ridiculous, it's just shameful how people were treated during this election.

I'll say to the Premier, and I said it publicly, if the Premier went out publicly and stated that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards said I'm prepared; if that is true, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards should be inside this House and explain what happened. Because the Premier of this province – now, Premier, with all due respect, I know we worked well on the COVID-19 stuff and I gave you credit for it and you deserve it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the hon. Member to direct his comments towards the Chair.

Thank you.

E. JOYCE: I didn't know, I was just looking.

If the Commissioner for Legislative Standards says to the Premier of the province: I'm ready. And he's not and we're going to let him off the hook, the frustration everybody went through in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; we're going to allow that to happen. An Officer of the House of Assembly, who's responsible to report to the House of Assembly, doesn't have to report to the House of Assembly.

We all know; every one of us went through it. We all know the frustrations, yet if the Premier's statement – and I have no reason to believe, Mr. Chair, that the Premier's statement is not correct – but if that statement was made to him that he's ready, the Commissioner is ready, and he was not ready – it's obvious he was not ready – he should be in front of this House of Assembly right here, right now, and answering questions and let us decide. Let us decide.

But now the government is saying, well, we can't do that because if we do that we are going to say there were major issues and we may not be the proper government that should have been in here. You may have won by more seats, who knows, but the institution is what needs to be protected, the institution of this House of Assembly.

I said before – I won't get into it – when you don't hold an Officer of the House of Assembly to the truth, follow his act, this is what's going to happen, what happened in this last election.

All of us Members in this House have frustrated people in their districts, not just independents, not PCs, not NDPs, not Liberals, all of us felt the frustration and felt there was something that wasn't right. When you go out publicly and state that I can't let people phone in and vote by phone because it's breaking the act, and you turn around and break the act, and you're still there. Let one of us do that, let one of us break the act and see how long before we're going to be brought up before this House of Assembly.

Why are we doing that? It's the institution. I'll just give you another example, a good example, and I have all this in writing. We faxed in close to – I'm not sure how many they counted – 150 applications up to the day, probably Tuesday or Wednesday, I was calling in, no one got it. Finally, someone got one. We said: What's going on? I said to people, and I did it, I gave them the direct number to the Chief Electoral Office, I gave them the direct number, and there was one lady there that was very helpful, very helpful.

Do you know what they were told? The deadline was supposed to be that Friday, I think this was that Wednesday, before the extension, they extended it again. This was one of the reasons why the extension was coming up. Do you know what they were told? My God, that's on my desk; I don't know why that wasn't sent out. The next person said: My God, you don't have your ballots; it's right here in front of me – 140 to 150 that day started getting calls, that night before the extension; the deadline was that Friday. They started getting calls. At 9:30 or 10 o'clock that night they were still getting calls saying, oh sorry, your applications are here. Then the extension was made for another two weeks. We're sitting here and saying that's all good? That's proper to do it?

I know the Minister of Justice and Public Safety is going to review the Elections Act and I know he will do a great job with it. Why doesn't this House of Assembly – and this would be a great resolution, it's no good for me to put it in because I know the government isn't going to go

ahead with it – put a motion on this floor to ask the Commissioner for Legislative Standards how many days were the phone lines and computers down, crashed, during that five-, six-day period? You will be shocked.

Forget the last hour on that Friday night, but how many people here don't even know that the phone lines weren't even up until Sunday. How many people? How many people know that there was only one number outside to call in, toll-free number? Those are the questions we need answered in this House. This is not a Liberal thing; this is not a PC, NDP or independent thing. This is the integrity of this House of Assembly, because the Commissioner for Legislative Standards reports to this House of Assembly. If we don't get these answers and we're just going to brush it off and say, okay, the election is over, well I can tell you there is still a lot of bitterness about this election. I can tell you that right now.

I'm not saying that the Liberals may have won more seats; you may have won more seats. The PCs may have won a few of our seats, who knows? But I can tell you it's the process that failed us. Someone has to be held accountable on the process. Because if the Premier said the process was in place, when it was not in place, there has to be accountability.

For us to not hold an Officer of the House – if he can come in and explain all the issues, which I doubt very much if it can be done, if he can come in and explain all the issues in this House of Assembly, fine and dandy. But I can tell you, until we get to the bottom of it by taking this here and burying our heads in the sand – because the Commissioner for Legislative Standards is over there – and saying, okay, we will amend the Elections Act, but not looking at what happened, why it happened, the extension after extension, the frustration, the ballots not being sent out.

I'll just give you an example. We all experienced this. You walk in on election day, in-person voting, you walk in, I'm 17, I turned 18. I walk in, I have to show proof of ID that I'm 18 years old and I have to be sworn in. This election, you call in: Yes, I just turned 18. Okay, I'll send you out your ballot. It's against the act. It's against the act.

If you look at the act for in-person voting, if a person is not on the voters' list, they have to be sworn in when they walk up to vote.

Because we're in the middle of a pandemic and because it was told to the Premier that I'm ready, how can we take that act that we approved – this Legislature, somewhere along the line, approved that. Every time there are changes to the Elections Act, we voted for it – we agreed with the Elections Act. How can we take that Elections Act now and just throw it out through the window and say: forget that now, we'll change the – you can't do it, for the integrity.

I know my time is winding down. I'll be back because I have another five or six pages of issues. I'll ask the government, on behalf of the integrity of the Legislature – because that's what we all represent – we need to dig in and do an investigation of what happened that caused so much frustration. I called in once, Mr. Chair, and it was like voting suppression in this province during this election.

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: I make no bones about it.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Again, with a little bit more time, rather than the pressure of the 45 seconds at Question Period, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of the wonderful District of Gander for their support in returning me with an even bigger majority than on the previous two occasions. I look forward to working with and for them again over the next four years.

Certainly, it's been a challenge in the last 14 months to fulfill some of the roles of MHA, but we laid the groundwork well in 2019. There was

significant infrastructure investment in the district. I had a phone call from the mayor of Gander the other day and amongst our discussions, he mentioned the quality of the roadwork that had gone on, on the J. R. Smallwood Boulevard. Each year, certainly since before Hurricane Igor, they had significant flooding there with heavy rainfall events. This time, for the first time in living memory, the ditches were not at capacity, the culverts did not overflow and traffic was not at all disturbed despite the heavy rainfall.

Gander Academy sees a fairly significant rebuild around a gymnasium that still has many years of life left and has the advantage of being outside the size requirements for a K-to-3 school. That leaves the municipality in a position to continue to host provincial and regional championships in that gymnasium. As part of a wellness initiative, I was pleased to go with some of my colleagues to start the ground breaking for a multiplex, the outside piece of which will be ground and sewer work and a running track and court. So, again, a challenge there.

We have also accented some of the services, particularly with *Towards Recovery* and access to a desire from both the federal and provincial governments working together, to improve mental health and addictions services there. We have a hub and spoke system with an ODT hub in the area. There's a spoke going in another kind of hotspot, unfortunately, out in Gambo. We now also have a Mobile Crisis Response Team, which was one of the first of three involving the Royal Canadian Mounted Police rather than the RNC, as had been the pioneers out here on the Avalon.

I think it would be reasonable to perhaps use some of my time here to talk a little bit more detail about some of our vaccination and COVID response. I think before going down that road it's really important to emphasize how well the people of this province have done in following the recommendations of our chief medical officer of Health. Whilst our numbers do trickle along and they are pretty well exclusively related to travel or contact of travel, we still only have a per capita incidence of 4.5 cases per 100,000. Keep that number in mind, because as of yesterday, Toronto is at 218 per 100,000 and Regina currently is at 348 per

100,000. These are cities, not provinces, producing these numbers.

It is a testament to the people of this province and how seriously they have taken Dr. Fitzgerald's recommendations, and followed the masking, the distancing, the hand sanitizer and all these important public health measures, which have also, for the second year in a row, protected our vulnerable individuals in hospitals and long-term care from seasonal ravages around Norwalk virus, enterovirus and seasonal flu. We have seen very, very few, when almost every week in February under previous years, we would see units closed to visitation completely for periods of 10 to 14 days because of these kinds of challenges. So good health just doesn't protect you from COVID, wellness measures work for a whole lot of things.

In terms of the vaccine delivery, as of close of business on Sunday we had 125,675 people either fully or partially vaccinated across the province. We used 94 per cent of all that week's dose of vaccine by Sunday. We've had a further 29,000 doses delivered for this week. Those are our regular supply from Pfizer and Moderna. Those are shipped in towards the end of the week. We can rely on them. Particularly, Pfizer have become extremely reliable and their numbers you can kind of take to the bank.

That's the vaccine we allocate to keep the clinics working, a baseline activity. Then we use Moderna to top up and increase the capacity. We'll have another 14,000 doses coming in over the course of this week, which this week, in actual fact, are all from Pfizer and will make up for the fact that Moderna is experiencing significant challenges and will be down 7,500 doses this week compared with what they promised.

In May, we will see our regular dosage allocation from Pfizer go up to 28,000 a week. In June, we will see it go up to 32,000, nearly 33,000 a week. That is the kind of reliable schedule on which I base my projections about having at least one shot in everybody by Canada Day, plus or minus a week, and a second shot for everyone who's eligible and who chooses to take it by September.

That doesn't happen just by things falling out of a plane; there is a huge organization behind that. We have extremely capable staff within the department, but that is just the leadership that helps guide the regional health authorities, their vice-presidents and their regional medical officers of Health. We all hear about Dr. Fitzgerald but we don't hear as much about Dr. Seviour, Dr. Allison, Dr. Dutt or Dr. Pickett who are instrumental figures within their own regions for operational activities around where and when to set up community testing, for example, as it happened in Western not that long ago.

I'm pleased to report to the House that not one of those tests turned up positive – not one. Again, a testament to people taking these things seriously and looking towards the health of others. By watching our behaviour, we protect not only ourselves, but we protect our loved ones, our neighbours and our community in general. I would encourage people – as Dr. Fitzgerald says, hold fast, or as we used to say in the UK, hold the line. We'll get there. With that increasing proportion of people being vaccinated, there is some optimism that, again, we can look to what else we can do to normalize life, how we can reunite families who don't normally live in this province, do it safely and how we can begin to transition from the impacts of COVID on the economy to mitigate those going forward.

The only way to have a healthy economy in this province is to have a healthy population to deliver it. If you think that the measures that we've had to take are the ones that have damaged the economy, I don't think you've looked around far enough to realize that in those jurisdictions that ignored those measures in favour of a different approach, have suffered even greater challenges from a health care perspective than we have.

I think a lot of the criticisms you hear are quite frankly people who are frustrated with the fact that their lives are not where they would like them to be. I sympathize with them because our lives are not where they should be or we would like them to be. You only have to look at the arrangement in this Chamber; you only have to look at the way we carry ourselves and the way we behave when we're in social settings. It's been a real challenge and will continue to.

We have found other ways of connecting socially. I'm sure I could go on about that at some length, but I see my time, too, is winding down. I'm delighted to be back in the House for the 50th General Assembly. I look forward to some interesting comments from all sides of the House as we move through our budget process in the next few weeks.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is an honour and privilege, once again, to be in this hon. House and to represent the good people of the District of Mount Pearl - Southlands. I certainly want to thank them for their renewed confidence in me and my ability to represent them. I want to thank all of the great volunteers – family, friends and volunteers – who helped me get back here again today.

I also want to congratulate all Members; a lot of returning faces and, certainly, a few new faces. To all the new people: You're going to find this to be a very interesting experience, for sure. You will learn as you move on and you get experience.

I can remember my first couple of days in the House of Assembly. You were kind of awestruck; you were looking around at all the people there and you realize that you're one of a select few who get to do this. After a time, it sort of becomes old hat, you get used to it and it's just like another day at the office. We still always have to be thankful for the opportunity and realize the importance of what we are doing here in this hon. House.

Mr. Chair, there are so many things I could talk about here this evening. I am glad that notice has been given that we're going to be sitting late because my colleague from Bay of Islands said he had five pages full, I have 10, so we are prepared. I cleared my calendar for this evening so I have lots of time to be here this evening. I'm sure everybody is really glad to hear that.

I, too, want to reflect on the provincial election. I do want to acknowledge and thank my colleagues from the Official Opposition in bringing in their motion for Private Members' Day. Obviously, I had brought in a motion as well, but unless it was going to be called by the government from the Order Paper, then it would just sit there. I suspect it's going to sit here for this entire sitting, which is probably not a bad thing because every time they look at their Order Paper, it is going to be a constant reminder of the fact that this needs to be done. I certainly intend to remind the government every opportunity I get, whether it be through Interim Supply, petitions and every thing else. I, as one Member, am certainly not letting this go.

I want to concur with much of what has been said by my colleague from Bay of Islands and the Member for Conception Bay South. They have really hit some salient points from me. It really is about the institution. This should not be a partisan issue. As an independent Member, it doesn't matter to me if the seat of government is red or blue really, or orange for that matter. It is really irrelevant.

I was elected and I received a strong mandate from my district so it is not about sour grapes or whatever. I could put my head down and take the approach – I heard one Member on the opposite side talk about let's just move on. Someone told him we're just going to put our head down, move on, get on with the business, forget about it. I could take that approach. We could all take that approach, I suppose. That's not the approach that I'm going to take because what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong.

There are different aspects to this whole issue around the provincial election. One aspect is being challenged in the courts. We'll leave that at the courts. Every candidate has the right to challenge these matters in the courts if they see fit. That's been done now in a few cases and I guess it will be up to the courts to decide on that matter. I'm not even going to address that.

Of course, the government has said that they are going to address the Elections Act and we're going to modernize the Elections Act. That's a good thing. I support that 100 per cent. I'm glad they're going to do that, but that's not the piece that's not being addressed. There's sort of this

third piece right in the middle and it relates to the House of Assembly, the integrity of the House of Assembly and the integrity of elections in Newfoundland and Labrador. It relates to having confidence in the election process, it relates to having confidence in Elections Newfoundland and Labrador and it also relates to having confidence in the office of Legislative Standards.

We must remember this is a dual role; the Chief Electoral Officer is also the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. So if you are questioning the ability, the integrity or whatever of one office, really, you're questioning it on both sides because it's the same individual, it's the same team that are basically fulfilling a dual role. We must remember that as well. It's not just about the election.

As we go forward, there are going to be matters that will be addressed by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. We've seen them in the past, we've seen too many of them, arguably, in the last couple of years, different investigations and so on. We need to have confidence that those investigations are being done properly and that we can have confidence in it as Members. We can't do that if we have this sort of shadow now hanging over that office. We really do have that shadow hanging over this office. Nobody can deny it. On any side of the House there's not a Member here, I'm sure, that deep down inside doesn't know – they may not be able to acknowledge it. I get the conundrum that the government side would have. I get it.

If they support this investigation, then really what they're saying is we think there were problems with this process. Then, people are going to call into question: Well, if you think there are problems with the process, then maybe the Premier should call another election. It will put that pressure on if they were to do that. Perhaps it could influence one of the court cases if the government were to admit that there were issues there. I don't know. I'm not a lawyer, I don't know if it would or if it wouldn't, but I'm just sort of thinking that perhaps it would. So I can see reasons why the government would not want to accept the fact, publicly and in this House of Assembly, that there were legitimate issues with this election. I get it.

The other side of it is that if you simply stay silent, if you don't support the motion by the Official Opposition on Wednesday, then basically what you're saying, by default, is I'm aware of these things, because they've all been brought to everyone's attention, and I'm okay with it. I'm okay with it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Well, that's exactly what you're saying. If you don't support investigating what went on and talking about it in this House and asking questions and getting answers and holding the Chief Electoral Officer accountable, then by default your saying I'm okay with what went on. That's exactly what you're saying. There's no other way to spin this because that's the reality. That's something that we must all remember here.

I could go on and on with all the examples of stories that I was told and issues that I had with my constituents, and other Members, and I will, because there is lots of time. Like I said, we have all evening, and I have lots of examples, as other Members do as well.

Whether it be people not getting to vote for any number of reasons; whether it be the Chief Electoral Officer himself admitting that he let people vote by phone, which he even himself said in the national media was a violation of the act, but he did it anyway; whether it be the process of hand delivering ballots to just certain people, neighbours and acquaintances and so on.

How about the scrutineering process? Normally, when you have an election you have scrutineers, they're there for a reason. They get to watch the votes being counted to make sure that they're counted correctly. They get to watch the tallies being done, they get to watch the numbers being written down on the tally sheets. They get to look at, not just the ballots that are rejected but the ballots that are accepted. None of that happened in this particular case. All they did was they'd show you a box with the rejected ballots and say this is what we determined was rejected. That's all you got to do.

I did it once online and then I just didn't bother anymore. Buddy asked me: Are you going to go on? I said: No, I'm not even going to be a part of

this. In my mind, that would be acknowledging that this is okay. So I just put it in writing. I've got lots of emails, like the Member for Bay of Islands, where I put concerns in writing to the Chief Electoral Officer. I'm sure that everybody here has probably done the same.

The point is, we cannot simply let this go. We're here to represent the people and this is a fundamental right, which has been breached. We can't just pretend it didn't happen. We can't bury our heads in the sand. We have to keep this going, and I, as one Member, certainly will.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It is indeed an honour to sit once again in this House. My third election, Mr. Chair, bigger majority than ever this time. I'm so pleased with the people of my district and the support I've gotten there. I would like to thank my wife, my daughter and I guess my brother and mother because that's the four people that pushed me on top of my campaign team.

It was a great experience, Mr. Chair, to go through 10 weeks of an election. If COVID has taught us anything at all is that we've adapted to the world in the last 12 months, we've adapted to things. We got used to wearing our masks, we got used to social distancing. We got used to staying home, Mr. Chair. I guess through it all the pandemic has probably taught us, similar to what they did in the 1800s, the first line of defence is to stay away from people and use a mask wherever you can.

Mr. Chair, I want to take this opportunity, I guess I'll start off talking about my district and then I'll hopefully lead into, if time permits me, my new portfolio.

My district, as everyone would know, is Fogo Island - Cape Freels, a district that I live in, have lived all my life. I'm so proud to live there, Mr. Chair. I call myself the bayman and when I talk everybody know I am the pure bayman. I do not

try to pronounce my Ts and my Hs for the purpose of being out and seeing me any different than what I was. I thought it was the hon. Member said: don't change who you are. I would like to think over the last six years I haven't changed very much. I've been probably cynical at times, Mr. Chair, but my quick sense of wit sometimes gets me in trouble but it also gets me out of trouble, Mr. Chair.

To sit in this House, and I would always say to the new Members here, if you just sit back and you look up, you look from the ceiling down, you look from the coat of arms right down to the Speaker's Chair, you're always amazed to know that you're one of very few that ever get the opportunity to sit in that House, and that's never forgotten on me, Mr. Chair, and to be very respectful.

Yeah, I might give it a little remark to someone from time to time, but to be respectful in this House, and as someone said before, to do the people's work. It's very much an honour, Mr. Chair, to see where we are in the different parts of the province and to get the perspectives from everybody, all 40 Members of this House will bring something different to this House, Mr. Chair. They would represent their districts much like myself.

I kid with my Avalon Members for years, I live where you would love to come and visit. That's definitely four seasons of the year that would be in effect. We had a very short season this year, Mr. Chair. I can't get over the skidooning I did during the election, I'm almost ashamed of it to be honest, because you couldn't knock on doors. You could only phone so many times, Mr. Chair, so to get on the Ski-doo, to gas that up and just go out on a Sunday afternoon, I have to tell you, you talk about sense of stress relief.

In my district, we have a groomed trail system in the wintertime, lots of ice fishing, Mr. Chair. I'm not a big fan of ice fishing. I don't believe in drowning worms, to be honest, but I did catch one big trout this year. I would love to share that picture with anybody because it was – you know a fisherman is always this long? Well, I needed someone else's arm to reach the end of it, Mr. Chair. I have the picture, and it's not Photoshopped. It's a beaut, to be honest, so I know you will be envious.

In my district, yes, that's one thing you can do: you can go skidooning; you can go snowshoeing. I had a chance this winter to do a little bit of woodcutting, believe it or not, because in the pandemic, what are you going to do? You have to stay by yourself; you have to isolate, so you find things to do. I would say we adapted well in this province. I would have seen lots of people. You may see close family members, but there were no groups of people in cutting wood, to be honest, or out ice fishing. It was like family members, in that respect.

We did the snowmobiling last winter. Coming up now, in my district, is the fishery. As you know, being the Fisheries Minister, it may be a challenge from time to time, but I'm very proud to sit in my district and represent the many people in my district. I would estimate close to 10,000 people in my district are closely associated to the fishery, Mr. Chair. To be able to go on the wharf; last Sunday morning, to be able to go to someone's house and to share a coffee with them, one of my close friends, and talk about the fishery and how they're getting ready this year.

The price is up in the air right now, but this is the best price, by far, we've ever seen in the crab fishery. Quotas are up in most parts of the province. By all accounts, if they can have a safe – and I hope everyone would have a safe season and a successful season and catch all of their quota, people's bottom dollar will be greatly affected this year, to the good, Mr. Chair. The crews for the good. The more money people get, the more they can put back into our economy.

For my district, I have nothing only good things to say about what's going on in the fishery. I have, I think, six fish plants in my district, Mr. Chair, for Fogo Island to Hare Bay. Do you know every species that comes out of the ocean is processed in the plants in my area? The money that's going to be coming in there is absolutely wonderful; it is amazing. I don't live in a district of the province, I guess, that's depressed in any way when it comes to the fishery. For that, we're fortunate.

You could come down and you could see some of the fishing boats. I know out around this way you see some of the big 65-foot longliners. If you come out and go in to New-Wes-Valley and

see the boats that are tied to the wharf, the many millions of dollars that people invested into the fishery, Mr. Chair, and because those skippers have made that investment, people are making money throughout the district, the spinoffs from that.

Gander, I would like to think – the hon. minister that sits just behind me, his district certainly does well by our district, because people come out there and they buy their cars and their ATVs. Let's go back to COVID. If you look at the recreation industry this year, more money was spent on every small-ticket item than you can imagine. If you want to go out and buy a side by side, if you want to go out and buy a Ski-Doo, if you want to go out and buy a quad, a small boat or motor, you had to wait, Mr. Chair.

People never had the money to spend, so they spent it and kept it close to home. One dealer said to me: I'm getting all Walt Disney's money this year. How true can that be? So it's a bad wind that blows somebody good, Mr. Chair. Walt Disney is not doing as well this year, but I can tell you the small retailers and the outdoor stores in my area are doing really well.

I'll get into the department, so it's fishing, farming and agriculture. What a great department to be in, what a great department to learn. A lot of people are outdoors people. I'm a very outdoorsy person. You take the moose licences. You wouldn't believe the number of people that were making calls and saying, where's my moose licence. It should be out. They were sort of blaming that on the election. It was a bit funny because the first day that the licence came out in the mail, 70 per cent were applied online. That's how eager we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to get our big game licence. That would have been the moose, the caribou and the black bear licence, Mr. Chair.

In the next month or so, we're going to look at salmon angling being opened up on our rivers – the time to get out there and spend time with your family. I saw somewhere that spending time with family is some of the best medicine you can get in the world. So get out on those rivers, get out on these lakes, get out on these ponds, do a little bit of fishing and enjoy the

outdoors. That's what our department has to offer. We're the outdoor side of it.

Today we're looking at some of the biggest potato productions that are probably going to go ahead in Glenwood. There are two other places on the West Coast: Jumpers Brook and another place that eludes me right now. If we can get an RFP to get farmers out there, Mr. Chair, we'd have potato production of probably 150 tractor-trailers of potatoes to come out this year out of the Newfoundland soil.

Most potatoes in this province, Mr. Chair, would have been backyard people with their little cellar with their own garden. So we're going to promote all that. We're going to promote the young farmers in that industry. I'm looking forward, actually, to a trip down to one of the aquaculture plants, down to Grieg, later this week where there are new eggs coming into the system. To see how it's going to go from the egg production to the small fish production to the point where it's released to the pens: those are all of the things that I'm very much interested in. That's going to add to the food sustainability for this province.

As we all know, over the years we've struggled. If you ever looked at a potato, most times it came from PEI. What a great opportunity to go out and you would support a Newfoundland farmer. Only recently, a Newfoundland farmer sat in this Legislature, Mr. Chair. What a great opportunity for farmers, like the gentleman who sat here before, and for us to get out and support the people in our province, to keep our money here, to promote what we have here.

Mr. Chair, another thing on the forestry side. It's not big in my area but I do have an area in the Gander Bay region. It was born and raised on the forestry and the sawmills. Everybody who went out this year and bought a sheet of aspenite would have seen the price of aspenite and plywood has gone through the roof. If you look at the small sawmill, the small sawmills are the ones that are going to help the people to build their new houses this year.

Mr. Chair, I can't believe I ran out of time as quick as that. I'll be back to talk later.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

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

Once again, congratulations to everybody who was elected. To all of those who put their name forward and were not successful, thank you very much for stepping up too as well.

Mr. Chair, the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans put me here not because of what I've done in the past in politics, because I never had any experience in politics or I never really sat at a desk before. They put me here because they know the fighter I am, how I keep it real and how I will remain in the trenches with the people I represent. I can't thank them enough for putting me back here.

I find, though, over time politicians lose a little bit of sight, when it comes to staying within the trenches, of the people they represent. They can get too high a level sometimes and they forget to stick a face to the problems and the issues that we see throughout the province. That's a big deal because those are the people that we represent.

In thanking all of the people from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, there's also an apology that I have to make, and that's to my own son, one of my very special constituents. My 16-year-old son, Declan, is a great kid; loves dance, does well in school, outgoing, lots of friends and looking towards the future. But when he looked at me and told me that he can't wait to get the heck out of here one day, that hit me pretty hard.

For everybody in here today, if it doesn't hit you very hard, there's the door and you should exit it through it because it should hit you pretty hard. This is not lip service. I managed to talk to a lot more of his friends out there – he's in Grade 10 – 10, 11, 12. A lot of people can't wait to get the heck out of this province. If that's not a message that should hit you dead centre in your heart, like I say, maybe you shouldn't be here.

It hit me pretty hard because I've been fighting my whole life to keep that kid here. How many parents and how many grandparents have to call

their loved ones, their grandchildren away. Parents now who have grandchildren of one and two years old who've never ever seen them. Their families had to pick up and move away and that's not good enough.

Moving over to that and keeping with that same theme, rotational workers, the rotational workers here can be estimated up around 20,000 or 30,000 people. I hope everybody realizes the revenue that rotational workers take to this province, because without it we would be done. Those rotational workers who put it on the line every day, they deserve a huge debt of gratitude and I thank them every single day.

What have they gone through? Some of those rotational workers have seen their families for 30 or 45 days over the past year. The sacrifices they have made are beyond measurable. We're in jeopardy of losing some of these rotational workers now as COVID winds down and they see that they can go elsewhere. Do you know how easy it would be for a rotational worker who works in Alberta just to move up there? Lower taxes. That's exactly what they're contemplating right now – taking their family and leaving.

I was given the honour of a shadow role when it comes to population growth. We have a huge problem here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The population growth that is supposed to take over coming up to Grades 10, 11 and 12, all those young families that are working rotational, if they don't stay it's going to impact our population growth like you would never ever believe. That's something that we have to make sure we keep an eye on and we try to keep as many people here as we possibly can. Without young families, we're done; without jobs, those young families will go, we're done. We need to make sure that we definitely put everything we have – all of our resources – into keeping whoever is here, continue to keep them here now.

In the Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District, of course, issues just like there is anywhere else across the province. I touched on it earlier today, the Lionel Kelland Hospice with a question. Seven years, three administrations and we still have people dying around this province curled up on floors, in hospital hallways. We have a

building that's been given to the province and all it needs is some upgrades and a staff, and the people, our seniors, will be able to die with dignity. We're all going to be there one day, every one of us. Wouldn't you like to be surrounded by your family in a place of a joyous send-off to celebrate your life, and not be curled up on some hospital floor with everybody looking at you? That's how people are dying right now and it's sad.

I'm not asking anybody to build infrastructure; it's already there. Seven years we've been asking for this now. I thank the Minister of Health today for his answer. I look forward to opening that one day, cutting that ribbon and getting some people in there with their families because it's going to be a joyous occasion for us.

The mental health crisis here in the province continues on. It's getting worse and worse. It seems as though, with our young crowd, as well, in high school, the suicide rate is up. I know COVID has something to do with it, but, again, unless families have revenue coming in to their bank accounts to pay for their bills and their food and whatnot, the mental health crisis is only going to exacerbate. That's something we have to get a handle on as well. There are so many issues.

I know that we're not in the greatest of fiscal situations right now, but every time a politician stands up and talks about transparency, accountability, honesty, I cringe. I absolutely cringe over here. Because every person says it, but how many people mean it? When the government say that they want to work together, by God, I can't wait to work together, to truly work together.

Do you know how much I hate sitting here and asking questions and trying to call out everybody on that side, when we could do it with a meeting anywhere else in the House of Assembly or in Confederation Building and talk about our real, general issues within our districts? I would love that. That's exactly what we need to do. I look forward to it, because we have four years now to dig in together.

Yes, of course, they're the government; we're the Opposition and we need to hold them accountable, but there's nothing wrong with us,

if something is done good on the government side, saying: Great job, guys. I applaud you. That's fantastic. The counterpart to that is there's nothing wrong with somebody in government standing up and saying: No, this is wrong. We need to do this different. That's exactly what we need to get past.

The other thing is we need to not go against our own people. I look at Crown lands every day. The majority of my phone calls are Crown lands. I just can't get over how disruptive the whole process is. People still waiting two, three, and four years to get a piece of Crown land. That's not the real crazy part. The crazy part now is I have people calling my office who are being told: Your cabin is going to get taken down if you don't move it four feet back from a waterline. After being there for 25 and 30 years, they are expected to pay thousands of dollars to pick up their cabin, move it back four feet and lay it back down again.

I don't know if that sounds insane to anybody else, but it's insanity to myself, when we're trying to keep money in our residents' pockets, and that's what they are being asked to do. That's what they are being asked to spend their money on. That's something that I'm hoping to dig into with the minister moving forward, because we have to start putting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. It's been my motto since the day I got elected, and as long as I'm here, it will continue to be my motto.

I have also been give the shadow role of Labour. When we talk about putting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, it is kind of tough to say you are putting them first when we have drywall people brought in from Ontario to work in the Corner Brook hospital; that's exactly what is happening right now. There are people sat home on their couches right now that would love a paycheque for putting up some drywall. How is this still happening?

We have been talking about our community benefits agreement for the two years that I have been here. I'll be looking forward to working with the minister, with Darin King, with Trades NL to get a community benefits agreement in place that will work for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know it is passionate, but we are here for that reason; to put our people first and to make sure that they get exactly what they need to continue to move their families ahead, to pay for their food, light bill, to pay their mortgage. That is something we have to look at to make sure we do.

I'll just quickly paraphrase what the Minister of Health and Community Services alluded to earlier, he talked about the pandemic: and those who didn't take the proper measures have suffered. Yes they have, absolutely, I couldn't agree more; the proper measures would have been something that we put in place October 7, 2020, when we came in here with a PMR and asked that we put a fixed election date forward to the end of next summer, that's what we put forward.

By your own governments decision, this province will be vaccinated, anybody who wants to be, by the end of the summer; that just would have made sense.

I made a commitment to myself, I don't want to look backwards, I want to look ahead, I want to work with government but we need to work together. I've been saying it forever: there are a lot of good people on that side and there are a lot of great people on this side as well, but we need to work together.

Let's cut the lip service, starting today in the 50th General Assembly, and really, really start working together. We have four years guys and girls; four years to help the people of the province get back on track. It is not going to be easy but it can be done. The ministers do not work for their districts, they work for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, let's not forget that and let's work together.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Any further speakers to the resolution?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I did want to start off by thanking the constituents of the District of Waterford Valley.

It's not quite the 300th, I have a while to go, but certainly the eighth time being returned. I know somebody earlier, I forget who it was, but somebody said the challenge first is getting elected and then getting re-elected. I will say for the new Members here – well, for everybody, really – if you do your work, it doesn't matter what side of the House you're sitting on or what the issues are during an election, if you do your work and you service your constituents well, the reward is getting re-elected. That's something to keep in mind.

I think it's an honour for the 40 of us to be here, and I know I've said this previously in the Legislature, but it is an honour. We are 40 people chosen by over 500,000 people to represent those 500,000 people. It's an honour and it's a huge responsibility. It's one that I don't take lightly at all. So I wanted to thank the District of Waterford Valley for returning me here. I feel quite honoured because the victory was quite solid. They spoke very strongly in favour of the fact that they wanted me here. I am absolutely delighted with that. I know we had a very solid team of volunteers as well.

I will point out a couple of stats. One is myself and the Member for Topsail - Paradise, I think, were the only two districts in the province that actually had the total amount of vote for the districts that had gone up. I think that's worth noting and recognizing the Member for Topsail - Paradise and myself. My colleague, the Government House Leader, I was nipping at his heels for the highest number of votes in the entire province, but he actually got it. I was close, but I have to recognize the Government House Leader because he, obviously, did well in his district and served his constituents well also.

None of us can do this without a very dedicated team of volunteers. I don't know if anybody really in the general public, other than our volunteers, recognize the fact that they are volunteers. They put in, in some cases, hundreds of hours through the course of a campaign to help us get elected to represent the district. No different than volunteers in any organization, they have to be recognized for that.

This is politics and it's the political process. It is different in many cases when you knock on a door and say that you're there for the Cancer

Society or any other charitable cause, there is not a divide of opinion. People answer the door understanding that you're there to volunteer for a very worthwhile cause. In politics, sometimes you knock on a door and there are divided opinions. Those volunteers don't always face a friendly face on the other side of the door. When they volunteer for us, sometimes it's not easy for them. Most often, it is and people are polite, but they face challenges in volunteering sometimes. That is to be recognized as well.

I'm always honoured to sit in this Legislature. This is my 26th year sitting here and I can tell you that it is as much an honour today as it was the first year that I was elected. To each of my colleagues here: I look forward to working with you. We won't always agree on this side of the House and on that side of the House, but I think when we disagree we can do it respectfully, or at least that's my hope.

I wanted to talk briefly on the Trail of the Caribou. I know the Premier read a Ministerial Statement this morning on that. I think the significance of that for the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and what happened 100 years ago – over 100 years ago now – during the First World War is absolutely significant. While it was read in a Ministerial Statement, and it just took a couple of moments today to read that, the significance of the completion of the Trail of the Caribou is profound for this province and an honour for the eight individuals that lay in rest in Gallipoli, but all of those who served in the First World War and ever since that in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

There are a number of people that were paramount in making it happen. I know Elinor Gill Ratcliffe, a friend of mine – who probably won't be pleased I'm raising her name here in the House today – contributed significantly to the monument itself; I know that Susan Patten contributed to the monument. We recognize today the folks at our post-secondary institutions who did the 3-D imaging and so on. There are also individuals like Frank Gogos, Ron Penney and others who had been working at this for a number of years to try and complete the Trail of the Caribou.

I wanted to point out Selçuk Ünal, who was the Turkish ambassador at the time. While there

were many, many hours of work put in by a number of volunteers who are dedicated to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and to having seen the completion of the caribou happen, Selçuk Ünal, the Turkish ambassador – when I was Speaker, I set out to try and complete the Trail of the Caribou. I mentioned it here in the Legislature during the 100th anniversary of Beaumont-Hamel. Selçuk had invited me into his home on a number of occasions in Ottawa. We had meetings. He made the connection, politically, between our province and the Turkish government, opened doors within the Turkish government and arranged meetings and discussions between the Speaker's office here and the Speaker's office in Turkey.

One of the things Selçuk had said, which was surprising, really, but it's the first time either the Speaker or the premier – and the former premier had visited his residence as well. It was the first time either the Speaker – and in Turkey, they hold the Speaker in very high regard – or a premier had gone directly to Turkish officials looking for this. He said that was significant. It was important because, previously, as dedicated and hard-working as government officials were who represented the province, when the political ask was made from the highest levels of elected officials, Selçuk said that it got doors open in Turkey when he was working on it.

He is an individual, I think, that while he's moved on now and doing other duties within the diplomatic scene for Turkey, he had come to our July 1 celebrations on a number of occasions in this province and he had opened doors to getting the Trail of the Caribou completed. I developed a friendship with him and I truly appreciate what he had done in ensuring that we saw the conclusion of the Trail of the Caribou.

I say with some envy, I was invited by the Speaker in Turkey to go over and pick the site for the caribou, and had our trip arrangements made. The trip was a little bit postponed because I was invited to move from the Speaker's office to minister of Finance. I say with some envy that my colleague from the District of Lake Melville got to go on that trip and got to pick the site of the Caribou. I have very, very, very few regrets in politics, but the fact that I didn't actually get to go on that trip and do that for this province is

something that I look back on and say I would have liked to have done it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

T. OSBORNE: I know that the 10 minutes goes quickly, Mr. Chair. I'll get an opportunity to speak again.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers to the resolution?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to speak again on the election and the Interim Supply that we're speaking on. Just to let people out in the general public know, once we get a money bill, I can speak on any issue that's pertaining to the District of Humber - Bay of Islands.

I spoke earlier, Mr. Chair, on the election and the frustration that was placed on people throughout this whole process. I have to say that I never, since 1989, seen such a more frustrating time, a more upsetting time – lack of answers, lack of transparency – than I did in the last election. We all know about COVID. We all understand there's COVID and there are different situations and a different process that we had to use: phoning in, hand sanitizers and cleaning the areas. We all understand that.

That Friday night I was sitting in the car with two people when the Premier of the province was on with Dr. Fitzgerald. They were talking about the variant in Newfoundland and Labrador, and then they were asked a question about is the election going to be cancelled. They said it's not up to us; it's up to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. He was on national TV. At the same time while the Premier was saying that he doesn't know, he was on cancelling the election for Avalon and changing it. The absolute disrespect that he had for the process, for the Premier of the province, Dr. Fitzgerald and for the people of the Province

of Newfoundland and Labrador was very evident.

As I said earlier – and I spoke about it a couple of times and I heard the Premier – there was no need to call this election. There was absolutely no need to call an election. We had up until – he said by August 3 it had to be called; there was absolutely no reason – and I've seen it done before – that we couldn't come in this Legislature and say, okay, we can have an election in the fall. Most people would have a shot of their vaccine; we would have a fall election. So there was a clear window that this election could've been held this fall; absolutely no doubt.

If the election was going to be called and it was going to be pushed ahead, we, as legislators and, in this case, the Premier, who stated himself that he made the decision to call an election, he should've had more assurances from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards on how the election was going to be run with the issues that we were facing, especially after that Friday night. After that Friday night when we all knew the variant was in St. John's, and we know how many people stepped up to the plate in health care to do the testing in St. John's and in Western Newfoundland also, where there is a possibility that it may be out there and the election was cancelled.

We, as parliamentarians and the Premier who made the call in itself, should've had more guarantees what if this happened – what if. If the Premier had that commitment from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards that he could've run with all these different scenarios, then it should've been held much, much better in the term of practice, in the term of the way it rolled out, more accessibility for people, a lack of breaking the rules going through.

There's a breakdown there, and because the Premier stands up and says he had to call it and because the Commissioner – and none of us could have questioned the Commissioner to say, okay, what plans did you have in place? Who gave you the authority to accept voting over the phone; who gave you permission? Who gave you permission not to put in a second line for people outside the Avalon so they can call in? Why wasn't that done? There are many

questions that I would love to have answered, because I was involved in running around.

If anybody around here – and I'm sure it's not just me, I'm sure it's not just me – in this Legislature or anywhere in Canada thinks going around to some seniors or going around to houses and asking people for their driver's licence so you could take a photocopy so you can send us an application is a proper way to run an election, there's a problem. Anybody who thinks that seniors, in some cases, holding up their driver's licence to windows and you put up a big rod so you can take a picture so you can get in to get a ballot for the seniors, you think that's right?

Do you think when people died in wars so we'd have the right to vote, if you want to vote you have the right to vote, is that the way they envisioned us to vote in this province? Going around with cameras and seeing how high we can get it, get people standing on shoulders to take pictures so you can get a copy of their driver's licence or their ID, if you agree with that, I guess there was nothing wrong with the election, absolutely nothing wrong with the election.

It is sad how many seniors that I know, personally, who are upset they never got the opportunity to vote; how many seniors in this province haven't got a computer? Fine, they might have a computer or an iPad. Now, you have to take a picture, download a picture and send it off with the application; I can't even do that.

Just think about what we put the people through in this province. Then for everybody here to say: no, no, we're now going to forget all that past. We can't forget the past, we can't; we have to do an investigation on it. We have to find out what mistakes we made.

I understand the government, the minute that this government says we have issues, we're going to stand up and the Opposition is going to stand up and say: we told you. There were problems with the election, what should we do about it now? That's what's going to happen, I understand that.

Again, I'll ask the question: How can we as legislators – we are in a Legislature, we are responsible, we make acts and govern in this province, we govern the laws in this province, how can we, if we're being honest to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for the next 10, 15, 20 years, how can we honestly sit here and let an Officer of the House go against the act that we enshrine to be followed in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; an Officer of the House who answers to this Assembly? How can we do it?

Forget about my personal dealings with the Commissioner, forget about that, but just look practically; how can we sit down and say to ourselves: Everything is good. If any of us here in this Legislature – we see that sometimes here where a Member may get a speeding ticket, it is all in the media, or if we break the act for some reason, it is all brought up here, you have to stand up and apologize in this House. But we're allowing an Officer of the House to go against the same act that we approved in the House and we're just going to throw our hands up in the air and say we'll change the Elections Act.

I don't mind saying I'm at the tail end of my career, who knows, if I ever do run again, I may not get elected. The great people of Humber - Bay of Islands may say: No, b'y, it's time to move on. Even a couple of them were starting to call me Joe Biden at the end of it, but I don't mind that. That's pretty insulting, I'm not that old yet but around just as long.

Mr. Chair, it's the integrity of this Legislature, I always said it's a responsibility for us to do it. If we don't get to the facts, even if we get to the facts and we don't dismiss the Commissioner, even if we say, okay, what were you doing this under, on what grounds and why, so we can learn from it. If we don't do that we, as legislators, are not doing our fiduciary responsibility.

If you're in a corporation, if any of us here was in a corporation, and we knew the person, the CEO of that corporation was breaking the act of the corporation itself and going against the regulations that you put in place, how long would that person stay there? Or how long would it take to call that person in and say, okay, we have concerns here, why did you do this?

How long would it take? It wouldn't take very long.

I'm not concerned about the outcome, what happens to Bruce Chaulk, I'm concerned about the integrity of the Elections Act, the integrity of this House of Assembly and how we can find out why all this happened; how we can ensure we make the act even stronger; how we ensure that this will never, never happen again. Because I can assure the people in this hon. House that if you knew the frustrations I felt and I seen and I heard from people in this province who wanted to vote but they couldn't do it and the ones that called in and never got a ballot; the ones who sent in on the email, never got a ballot. I'm sure everybody here that went through it has a lot of the same stories. I'm sure of that.

I'm just calling upon this Legislature to do our fiduciary responsibilities and have the Commissioner for Legislative Standards in this House of Assembly to answer questions from us, because we're responsible to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Further speakers to the resolution?

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me first of all – it's the first time I had the opportunity to speak in this Legislature, the 50th Legislature – thank the people of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville. I'll steal something from a former Member here, the beautiful District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville. I just want to say a big thank you to those residents who sent me back here for the third time. I promise them that I won't disappoint them. I'll always represent their needs. I'll always be accessible to them.

We, as all Members here in this House of Assembly, know that we don't get here alone. Our families and friends give freely of their time and talent to support us and I just want to say a big thank you to them. I wouldn't be in this Legislature, along with many of you great

people, without the volunteers and the support group that we all call friends and family.

Thank you to them and thank you to each and every one of you for your great work in putting your names forward to represent this province and your districts themselves. It's a challenging opportunity for all of us, not just in government, but as a House of Assembly. I think many of us have talked about the collaborative nature in which we want to work together. The issues are too big for us to be partisan, for us to look for the short-term wins. Let's get the long-term wins for the province, which is what we all need to be doing here.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say congratulations to the new Members that were elected to this Legislature here, this 50th sitting of the Legislature. We have a number on our side; we have a couple on the other side as well. I just want to say a big welcome to you all for coming here. It's a challenging opportunity, but it's also a very rewarding one. You get the opportunity to help people in your constituency that are sometimes at the last resort. You are sometimes that person that is a difference-maker for them. Sometimes the answers are not easy for them, but it's great that you're accessible and can listen to them and, in some cases – in pre-COVID times – a shoulder to cry on. Also, someone to lift them up a little bit as well, which is something we all want to do because that's what we're all here for.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the people of our province, each and every one of them. The challenges that this province faces are in some small part – and probably some medium part, too – to do with COVID, for sure. Everyone in this province has taken this – as the Minister of Health and Community Services has mentioned on numerous occasions, everyone has done their part; everyone has stepped up.

The level of COVID infections within our province is a direct reflection of the hard work and dedication of not just the Health and Community Services team, Public Health, Dr. Fitzgerald and her team, but also the people of the province. They listen to those regulations. We see what has happened when other jurisdictions haven't had that same compliance from the individuals within our province and in

their province. Everyone has done their job and I just want to say a big thank you to them.

Some of the things that we're able to experience as a province, as different as they are – like this House of Assembly wearing masks here – while I'm looking at all your, I'm going to say smiling faces, but I'm not sure about that right now. I think everything is different today. It doesn't mean it is bad; it just means different. It may be different for a good while ahead.

One of the good things that I've heard, even here as recently as just a few minutes ago from the Minister of Health and Community Services, is the fact that the vaccine rollout is ahead of schedule. We have a significant number of our population already vaccinated at least once. Everyone in this province will have the access to vaccinations, if they so choose, by the end of June, which is a fantastic thing for getting back to a little bit more of the new normal that we will all have to see.

It's exciting news to hear that from the department and officials. That's a testament to the hard work and dedication of so many people here – to just thank today. I'm very happy that that's where we're progressing and that's a good thing. I can only hope and pray that all of the provinces across our country have the same fortune that we do as soon as possible. We want our neighbours, our colleagues, our brothers and our sisters to definitely feel what we're feeling here, which is a little bit more of a safety net than some of those other jurisdictions have had. That's a testament to the people of our province.

I'd also like to take a couple of minutes to talk about my district and how happy I am and how proud I am that they entrusted me with this great, great honour again. I represent one of the most ethnically diverse districts in our province for a lot of different reasons. I also represent the foggiest district in our province. I think Minister Parsons may disagree to some points, but I think my district is probably the foggiest one. I'm quite happy about that as well; it's great for your skin.

I have a number of schools in my district, like many of you, and COVID has really played a role in how we interact with our students and

how we interact with our community. I find that challenging, like each and every one of you; I'm sure you find that same thing. I like to be in the community, I like to be supporting the community and that has been a challenge for me, but it's also been a challenge for those students, teachers and staff. I would be remiss if I didn't say thank you to the teachers and staff, in particular, for working so hard during these challenging times to educate our young people.

Those students, it's not unbeknownst to them how hard they have to work as well. It's slightly different not being able to interact with your friends or play sports the way you would like to do or the extracurricular activities. That has been challenging. That, too, will get back to normal, rest assured. I know that we're working very hard to do that and with a bit more commitment and a bit more patience, we'll get to that point.

I also want to say how happy I am that I have the opportunity to serve in Cabinet again, or to be invited in Cabinet by the Premier. Although in a different role than I went into the election having, I'm quite happy about what that holds for the future of the province and the future of our globe.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change is a very strong portfolio to have during these times. I've always heard from people that it's really important to leave things better than when you found it. That is something that we, as a global community, haven't done yet. I know we have to improve on that and I'm happy to be tasked with that opportunity of ensuring the environment that we live in, that we're just borrowing from future generations, is better for them after we leave this place. It's not an easy task; it's one that we really have to work very hard on. It's a task that we can do that's not only good for the environment, but also good for the economy and good for employment.

We talk about creating jobs. There are a significant number of jobs that will be created by greening our economy. That doesn't mean that other things are passed over, it just means that things are expanded on. One of the things I'm really excited about is how we move forward and progress the green agenda in this province. I look forward to working with all of

my colleagues in this House of Assembly to try to see how we can improve those things.

One of the interesting points that I just wanted to highlight is that one of my schools, back in 2016-2017, came in for a tour of the House of Assembly. It was Vanier Elementary. They came in and they wanted to meet the minister of Environment. They didn't really want to talk to me; they wanted to talk to the minister of Environment at the time. They've done that on two occasions and two different ministers of Environment. They were advocating for a ban on single-use plastic bags. You wouldn't believe the smiles on their faces when we actually got to the point where we could announce that was happening. They felt they played a role and they did play a major role in it.

They came in with a PowerPoint presentation and a video that the minister wasn't forced to watch, because he really wanted to watch it at the time. I think that it helped in him making the decision at the time, that that's the direction we needed to go in. The students played a very big role in that and I want to thank them for that. I'll see them in the future I'm sure, as we get close.

As my time winds down, I just want to take this opportunity to say congratulations to each and every one of you. I look forward to working with you; my door is always open. I look forward to us making this province a much better place to live, work and raise a family, as we all work hard together.

Thank you.

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

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak again. Mr. Chair, I kind of want to pick up where I left off, as it relates to the election. I want to continue the conversation because it is a very important one. I know there's been a lot said, but I feel a lot more has to be said. I just want to take the opportunity to really encourage the government to really consider what's being said

here in the House of Assembly today, to really consider the motions, the one that I brought forth and certainly the one that the Official Opposition brought forth and will be debated on Wednesday.

This is all about the integrity of the process. Yes, we have a number of independent Officers of the House – the Chief Electoral Officer being one of them, in his dual role as Chief Electoral Officer and Commissioner for Legislative Standards. We also have the Citizens' Representative and the Auditor General. We have the Seniors' Rep, the Child and Youth Advocate and we have the Privacy Commissioner. These are all very, very high level, independent, autonomous offices. They have to have that level of independence and that level of autonomy in order to do their job, because, quite frankly, a lot of the issues that they would be dealing with are very serious and high level issues that impact the public but could also impact Members of this House of Assembly as well. It's important that they have that independence and they have that autonomy.

With that great responsibility that they have also comes great accountability. Ultimately, that's what we're talking about here. We're talking about accountability. Now, I know accountability has been a challenge in this province over the last couple of years. I don't want to keep on going back to it, but I will, you look at the people that were named in the Muskrat Falls inquiry as an example. Some of those individuals are still walking the halls of Nalcor and they're still collecting huge bonuses year over year, after everything that went down, after the scathing report in the Muskrat Falls inquiry. People who were allegedly fudging numbers and hiding risk reports and everything else that went on, they're still working there and they're still collecting huge salaries and huge bonuses. The people are still paying for it. There has been zero accountability as it relates to those individuals.

Now we have another situation with this election and the scathing review that it has had, all the issues that have been outlined over and over again by Members of this House of Assembly and the general public. We need to have accountability. I'm not going to prejudge the outcome. This, for me, is not a witch hunt. It really isn't, for me. I have no personal axe to

grind with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, the Chief Electoral Officer, I have none. I have no issue with him on a personal level. I've had no dealings with him. There would be no reason for me to raise this.

Nor is it about the election and who won the election and who got elected and who didn't get elected. It doesn't matter to me. I'm not with any of the parties, so it's irrelevant to me. That's not what it's about. Like my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands said, it's about the integrity of the office and, quite frankly, the integrity of this House of Assembly.

We have a very huge responsibility. I'm sure we all know that; we take our Oath of Office. I know sometimes politicians, we all get a bad name and everything else. I know that sometimes there is jockeying back and forth here and so on, and people have compared it to a sandbox and everything else. I get all that. I've been part of it in the past: first to admit it. I've tried to do better over the last number of years, but certainly my early days, definitely part of it: guilty as charged. I have no problem saying it, because it's true.

We are put here in this serious position, as Members of the House of Assembly, and one of the things that we have to safeguard, above perhaps anything else, is democracy. That's what separates our province, our country from many parts of the world. Some of the things that have been alleged – and, again, I'm going to say alleged. Some of it is true, for sure, because I experienced a number of issues around the voting process and people not getting ballots and everything else.

I agree with a lot of the points that have been made by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and other Members, but some of the other allegations that are kicking around out there about ballot boxes and stuff being taken home by Elections NL staff and people being able to print their own ballots. Can you imagine people being able to print their own ballots?

Now, I don't know if that's true. That's one of the allegations by the NDP, the president of the NDP was talking about it on the news. I don't know if that's true or not. To me, it's hearsay

until there's proof that it actually happened. But can you imagine if that actually happened?

I cannot understand for the life of me how anybody in this House of Assembly could say, well, there's nothing to that, b'y, that didn't happen. Forget about it. I just can't imagine why we would want to say that. We need to find out. If it's foolishness, if someone stretched the truth or they made up stories or whatever, if that's what happened, well let's find out and let's put it to rest. Let's put it to rest.

One of the things about government and government agencies and departments and, yes, independent Officers of the House and so on, not only must they be operating in a proper and in an ethical way, but just as importantly I would argue – some might argue even more importantly – they must be perceived – they must be perceived – as operating in a proper and in an ethical way. That must be the perception by the public in order to have confidence in our institutions.

I would suggest to you that there are an awful lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, my district, every district, there are an awful lot of people who do not have that confidence right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. LANE: They don't.

In my petition, I quoted an article that was in the VOCM story there from a person who allegedly was a staff person there, worked the election and they compared it to a three-ring circus. That's not my words, that's the quote in the article: a three-ring circus with potential for voter fraud. I've heard a lot of people refer to: are we living in a banana republic? I'm sure people have heard that phrase kicking around out there.

That's not good. That's not how we should be operating. We should be striving for better than that. I know we all know that, everybody agrees with me, everybody agrees with me. I'm not saying that you don't agree with it. I know for a fact there's no way you can convince me that there's one person in this House of Assembly

that does not believe that our democratic institutions have to operate properly and ethically. I know everybody believes that and agrees with that.

All we're asking here on this side is let's take it a little step further now and let's ensure that everything that went down was done properly and ethically and so on, and if it wasn't – and I'm saying if – let's give the Chief Electoral Officer an opportunity, because everybody is entitled to give their side of the story and to defend their actions and so on. Maybe he can defend everything that was done.

I have my doubts and I have my biases built in here now. Some of the stuff, I have to be honest, I find it – I don't know how you would defend it, but maybe there's an answer that I haven't thought of and others haven't thought of. Maybe there's good reason, but let's give the opportunity to find out what happened and separate the fact from the fiction; get a response from the Chief Electoral Officer, let him answer those questions, provide his information and his explanation.

Then, we go ahead and do our job in this Legislature, of whom he reports to, and determine if we are satisfied that he did what he was supposed to do to the best of his ability, that what was done was fair, ethical and competent. If not, there has to be accountability. If so, we move on but let's find out.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There is definitely a consistent theme running through the House this afternoon, as folks welcome people back to the House and thank their constituency. I'm going to start the same way.

It is a tremendous privilege to sit here as we start the 50th General Assembly. For me, who just came through my fourth campaign and will soon be eight years in the House – one of the more

senior Members, I guess, in terms of time – I want to say to the new Members: Congratulations. Those seats cannot be bought; they're earned. You work hard for them.

Also, I want to say to the new Members that it's been my observation that the faces around you here are continuously changing. The one constant that remains is the people that you work for, the people that hire you. While it is a tremendous privilege that I have been granted the responsibility to be a minister again of two portfolios – and I'll talk about that in a few minutes – your district should always be first, the people that hire you.

I received a very nice letter earlier this week, actually, in the mail. Not many do that anymore. This gentleman talked about when you run the first time, people are sort of believing what you're going to say; they take you at your word and they elect you. But for three subsequent elections to be re-elected is very, very humbling.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I'm having difficulty hearing –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: That is a gentleman who has spoken a lot today. It is my first time and it is challenging here to hear myself.

I want to thank, Mr. Chair, the people in the district, my small but mighty volunteer team who gave so much of their time –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I am having a job to hear the speaker; I suggest that you take the conversation outside.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my team and I want to thank my family. This is a different area to choose and I

am sure there are many times they would prefer that I had chosen a nine-to-five job somewhere. Nonetheless, they have supported me and have been actively involved in my last number of campaigns.

Since 2013, Mr. Chair, I guess you might say I have had the privilege to take in all views in this house. I started with a small Opposition team; I think I joined a team of five Members. It seems a long time ago now and I was the only female at that time. I look back a lot of times now and I think being in Opposition was probably the easiest job you can have. What I mean by that is every single day we did the same as – they have a very important job in terms of holding government to account, but every single day you get up and you ask questions. Then, I went to your seat, as the longest serving female in our history to take the Deputy Speaker seat, where you get to sit and watch the lively, spirited debate on all sides of the House.

That was a tremendous privilege for me from the legislative side and working closely with Council there, over to government where you have a responsibility to the people and to the peoples' purse. I often think about when I knock on doors and I say to folks, I say to new people: be careful what you promise at the doors because it's not very long and you're going to be back there. Consistently, for four campaigns, the only thing I have promised is to work hard.

I read a quote one time that said: beware of politicians who promise pie in the sky because they're using your dough. We have to be careful with that, especially in these very difficult fiscal times that we are in. However, Mr. Chair, since 2013, working with leadership in the beautiful District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, we have made tremendous progress. Are we there yet? Are we where we need to be? Absolutely not.

Garth Brooks wrote a song called "The Dance"; I'm going to write one called the drive. When I fly into Blanc-Sablon and I cross the border into my district in L'Anse au Clair, I think back to what that was like when I was elected, June 25, 2013, to what it is like today. It's a tremendous difference. We did it because I had the support of my team; we did it in a very challenging fiscal time.

We were driving over 40-year-old pavement in the Labrador Straits that's mostly now been done. Ambulances and school buses couldn't operate because we were a district – the first principle of economics is that you allocate money based on need. That had not happened. That had not happened in 12 years of PC government rule and we were in a terrible state. When I left Red Bay, World Heritage UNESCO site, and I drove another three hours to my hometown in Charlottetown, I was driving on gravel road. I am now driving on pavement until I get to my access road, which we are working on for the long term.

There are community centres; there have been community projects, water and sewer and cell coverage in six communities that was not there. One person didn't do that. I did that building close relationships with municipal leaders. I did it by working very closely with the MP for Labrador. I did it by working with groups like the NunatuKavut Community Council. Many of these projects required funding by all different partners, Mr. Chair. That is how you make progress, by working together.

Mr. Chair, as we move forward we have a daunting challenge ahead of us. I think we've heard the Premier many times say that the status quo is no longer acceptable. Sometimes we say when we're looking for new ideas we need to think outside the box. I believe we're in a circumstance here right now in Newfoundland and Labrador where we have to think like there is no box. We have to bring new ideas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: We have to reimagine how things are done, Mr. Chair. The people of the province are depending on us. We have been finding our way through the province's first-ever public health emergency since March of last year. It's been a very different time.

We've been hearing much about the election. We did go through a different election in a different time. I do believe, Mr. Chair, when you look at the other provinces across the country where the writ was dropped and they went through an election, we probably would have

fares much the same way, other than the fact that nobody – Dr. Proton Rahman talked about, in his modelling presentation one day, nobody could have predicted the B117 variant and that supercluster spread that happened. Nonetheless, we found ourselves where we found ourselves.

For me, in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, while it wasn't my first election, it was truly my most humbling. The efforts that people went through in those different times to exercise their democratic right because they believed that I would be the best representative – and I mean my numbers were not a lot smaller than they were in the last election, despite the different challenges that we had, Mr. Chair.

I had people reach out from a bed at the Health Sciences Centre to say: Where can I vote for you? I had folks that were in different communities say: Where can I vote, I'm a thousand kilometres from home? Do I need to drive back? No, you don't need to drive back.

There were all kinds of stories that motivates you that right now, while we're in these challenging times, while every single ask and every single need cannot be addressed today, cannot be addressed in this budget, we will work with communities to do what we can, where we can.

I've been really, really, really privileged, Mr. Chair, to represent what I believe is one of the most beautiful pieces of land, I was going to say in this country, but I will say beyond that. When you drive through Labrador and you see the landscapes and it's so majestic, it's like a mini Alaska in many ways. We have not begun to tap into the tourism potential that's there.

So in these times, in these uncertain times when people need hope, I look to the potential that is still there. When I look to mining and I look to places like IOC where the more we mine, the more we find. We're still 50 years out; we do have lots of things to be hopeful for. We just need to get over this hump.

We cannot forget Muskrat Falls. People get tired of us talking about it, but the facts are there is \$600 million that needs to be come up with a year to avoid electricity rates from doubling. That's a lot of money, Mr. Chair, at a time when

everybody knows the fiscal state of the province. But if we make the right decisions, we will get through this difficult time and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will be stronger for it at the end of the day.

I thank you for the opportunity to say a few words. It is indeed a privilege to serve once again and I thank the people of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. I always try my best to be available and accessible to them.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further speakers to the resolution?

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 2)

CLERK (Barnes): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2, 3 and 4.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2, 3 and 4 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador, all of which has been authorized by Special Warrant dated March 24, 2021, for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, Committee report having passed the resolution and bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 2 carried.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 2 carried.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: The Chair of Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 the sum of \$2,086,721,900."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 the sum of \$2,086,721,900."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 2, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 2, the Interim Supply bill, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 2)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 2)

On motion, Bill 2 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 2)

On motion, Bill 2 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 2)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 2)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, Bill 5.

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy Act, 2015, Bill 5, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy Act, 2015, Bill 5, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy Act, 2015," carried. (Bill 5)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy Act, 2015. (Bill 5)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 5 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 7, Bill 6.

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Protection Of The Health Of Persons Exposed To Radiation And Respecting The Safety Of Persons In Connection With The Operation And Use Of The Electrical And Mechanical Components Of Radiation Producing Equipment And Associated Apparatus, Bill 6, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL shall now have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Protection Of The Health Of Persons Exposed To Radiation And Respecting The Safety Of Persons In Connection With The Operation And Use Of The Electrical And Mechanical Components Of Radiation Producing Equipment And Associated Apparatus, Bill 6, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting The Protection Of The Health Of Persons Exposed To Radiation And

Respecting The Safety Of Persons In Connection With The Operation And Use Of The Electrical And Mechanical Components Of Radiation Producing Equipment And Associated Apparatus," carried. (Bill 6)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting The Protection Of The Health Of Persons Exposed To Radiation And Respecting The Safety Of Persons In Connection With The Operation And Use Of The Electrical And Mechanical Components Of Radiation Producing Equipment And Associated Apparatus. (Bill 6)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 6 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 8, Bill 7.

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009, Bill 7, and I further move that the bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009, Bill 7, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009," carried. (Bill 7)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009. (Bill 7)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 7 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4, Bill 3.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to inform the House that I received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

SPEAKER: All rise.

Dated the 14th day of April 2021:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 March 2022, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of section 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*,

I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____
Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality, that the message together with a bill be referred to a Committee of Supply.

SPEAKER: The motion is that the message together with a bill be referred to a Committee of Supply and that I now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 3, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Resolution

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

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 the sum of \$1,371,724,400.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This bill is very similar to the last bill that we had before us, Mr. Chair, in that it is a granting of Interim Supply. The first bill that was before the House this afternoon was to dispense with the special warrant that was required because the House was dissolved and not in session and the special warrant was required and that brought us to May 31.

In this particular bill, Mr. Chair, we are now asking for a two-month Supply period: that would take us from June 1 to July 31, while budget 2021 and the associated main Supply bill is being introduced, debated and approved by the Legislature. The total allocation is \$1,371,724,400. This legislation will need to be passed by the House of Assembly and will need to receive Royal Assent so that we can meet payroll, income support and other expenditures effective June 1.

Mr. Chair, as I said when I was discussing the previous bill, government operations, including payroll, income support and other expenditure obligations such as calling and awarding of tenders need to have this Interim Supply so that we can carry on the business of government.

Mr. Chair, I will say that the business of government is based on the expenditures that were approved unanimously by this House in the fall of last year and this does not have any incremental impact on the government's financial position in 2021-22 and beyond, that which will be included in budget 2021.

Interim Supply does not allow us to make new spending commitments or introduce programs. Any new funding initiatives beyond normal business will require a budget vote and of course any special votes from this House of Assembly.

Again, Mr. Chair, I will remind Members of the House that, really, the rationale for the Interim Supply bill is that, so that it would give us time to ensure that we are able to dispense with the budget of 2021, have the opportunity for a rigorous debate and discussion in this House of Assembly; to go through the Estimates process, Mr. Chair; and then to ensure that we have a budget. Once the budget is passed by this House of Assembly, the Interim Supply bill rests.

I will say to the Members of this House of Assembly that the monies that are currently being requested takes us up to the end of July of this year to allow, again, for ample opportunity for that rigorous debate that will be required around budget.

Mr. Chair, before I pass the speaking opportunity to Members opposite and Members of our caucus for their opportunity to have their say on Interim Supply and the requirements for the next two-month period, I want to say to the people of St. John's West – it's a very historic district. It has had a Member of the House of Assembly since 1949, and many very important people have come through as Members of the House of Assembly representing the great and historic District of St. John's West, including some historic Members of this House of Assembly.

I'm very proud to represent St. John's West, Mr. Chair. I'm very proud to have worked hard on behalf of the people of St. John's West. I look forward to continuing to do so with integrity and strength, to represent their interests in this House of Assembly, to give them the opportunity to have their voices heard in this House of Assembly and to do what is in their best interest and always with integrity.

I also want to recognize, as this is Volunteer Week, Mr. Chair, all the volunteers. Not just the volunteers throughout all of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and those that contribute so greatly to the enrichment of our great province, but also the volunteers who worked so hard during the election campaigns for everyone in this House of Assembly. It was a long campaign, as has been noted multiple times already today, and those volunteers wanted to participate and ensure democracy, and they gave over and above when it came to ensuring that

could occur. I'm very proud to call them my friends, and a lot of them my family, and very pleased to recognize them on this Volunteer Week.

On that note, Mr. Chair, again, I'll say that this Interim Supply Act, 2021, No. 2, for the period of June 1 to July 31 in the order of \$1,371,724,400 brings the total of the two bills to \$3,458,446,300, and that is for four months' Interim Supply in a total.

Again, I think we've had a lot of discussion here today on the requirements for that Interim Supply. I ask for the support of this House so that we can move towards the budget of 2021 and have ample opportunity for a robust discussion, engagement, debate and review of Estimates.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Any further speakers to the resolution?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon.

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