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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 7:00 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader, I assume we are resuming debate on Bill 42.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak again on this piece of legislation. I feel privileged any time to be able to get up in this House and speak on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and especially the constituents of the District of Exploits. I had the opportunity to speak on Tuesday, but it was to the amendment that the Third Party put in, so this evening I am speaking on Bill 42.

When you are up and you are trying to explain what the boundary changes are, what you are trying to do here and bring in such an important and progressive piece of legislation and you listen to some of the comments made by the people across the way there, but I would like to start by saying that I think every one of us who are elected feel privileged to be here and we all have a passion for our Province. I think we are all very proud Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we certainly take pride in our own districts. The Member for Cape St. Francis, when he gets up, he prides himself in his district, as do I.

When I spoke on the amendment that the Third Party put in on Tuesday, it was An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act be not now read a second time, but that it be read the second time six months hence. There was nothing there to say anything about the boundary changes and even though it seems like everyone is in favour of it, if you listen to the Member for St. John's East when he gets up and he is talking about, well, we should not be doing it now; we should wait until 2016.

Unfortunately, when you get up the second time to speak on a piece of legislation you are

probably going to be a little bit repetitive, and that is not my intention. However, it was said back on Tuesday, and a couple different speakers here in the past couple of days, that even if we did wait until 2016, the census probably will not be ready until 2017, which is going to delay it until 2019.

So we are basically not getting anywhere with the piece of legislation; it is not going to happen. It seems like the majority of the members in this House are in favour of reducing the number of districts. We have all thought about it. I have thought about it; I have considered it. I have talked to some of my constituents, I have talked to some of my colleagues, and we feel that now is the time. We want an election before 2016 because it will be four years, and that was what the legislation was calling for previously.

When you talk about boundaries and you talk about districts – I made a comment here on Tuesday regarding the boundaries and the districts and the challenges. I stated that the Big Land has challenges. Everyone has challenges, but I did not say anything about the Torngat Mountains not being unique, because I think they are. I have a lot of respect for the Member for Torngat, and I have a lot of respect for the challenges that he faces. Most of us can drive to our communities – most of us. Some of us still have to go by boat, some of us have to go by helicopter, some of us probably just do it by phone, whatever; but the Member for Torngat cannot do that.

If you went back and checked what I said on Tuesday, I was talking about Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, I was talking about Placentia – St. Mary's, I was talking about Baie Verte – Springdale, and I was talking about their challenges. Are they unique? Maybe they are unique, but they are just not unique unto themselves. A lot of districts have the same challenges as Southern Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous career, I travelled right across the Province many times: the Northern Peninsula, Southern Labrador; yes, I land in Blanc Sablon when I go across the boat and I travel right on up through to Red Bay and Lodge Bay, and I would go through the rock cuts there in Lodge Bay, St. Mary's.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Tell us about the rock cuts.

**MR. FORSEY:** Well, we will not go there.

I have travelled up to Charlottetown and I have been in Cartwright many times. They do very well. I believe there is a new school being built now in Charlottetown.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the member to speak to the bill.

**MR. FORSEY:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I thought I was, but sometimes I guess I get just carried away a little bit – my apologies. I guess what I am trying to do is explain how we can represent the districts now today compared to ten, twenty, forty years ago and how we have advanced.

I said it before, today's communications and transportation systems enable us to represent the districts that much better. With these changes, I think it is time; the changes need to be made. I think for the Premier and his Cabinet and his caucus to be able to take this on – we support the Premier in this move. Sometimes you have to bring in progressive legislation and it is what we are doing now.

We are changing the boundaries and we want to change the boundaries. Who knows what the districts are going to look like? I do not know. That is up to the commission. We have no influence on what the commission is going to decide in regard to boundaries.

I have said it before, not wanting to be repetitious, but in 1975 the District of Exploits, that is when the district became Exploits. Before that, it came under Lewisporte, Mr. Speaker, which you are very familiar with.

Who knows where the boundaries are going to go this time? Who knows where they are going to go, but when it comes to representing your district, especially out in the rural areas – and that is probably where you would find some real concerns is in the rural districts, wanting to be able to be on the ground representing your communities in your district like the Member for Cape St. Francis.

My colleague from Cape St. Francis stated people want to see him out there to an anniversary. People want to see you out there representing them at the firefighter's banquet. You have to represent them in their applications to the government for roadwork and for municipal infrastructure. You need to do that as well. In the rural areas we all have challenges, Mr. Speaker. We know that.

Out here in the city, in St. John's, it is different. We have to represent communities because they have aging infrastructure. I recall when I was elected back in 2005 there were a lot of requests for municipal infrastructure that needed to be done, roadwork, but because this government was able to do it, that enables us to do our job a little better as a member. We can expand our boundaries because it is getting that much easier to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just touch on a couple of things. Back on Tuesday I think I explained why we need to do this, how we can do this, and the opportunities we have. When you listen to some of the speakers across the way, they want to compare when it is convenient. I think it was made today that the budget process in one province is different than ours.

**MR. KIRBY:** A point of order.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for St. John's North on a point of order.

**MR. KIRBY:** I am wondering what the budgetary process in another province has to do with Bill 42, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Again I would ask the member to confine his comments to the principle of the bill.

**MR. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I will try to stick to it. I was trying to make a comparison that now that we are talking about the electoral boundaries, we should not be compared to other provinces. When the legislation was brought in and introduced, we were talking about other

provinces. It has been mentioned many times today on this legislation by different members.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. FORSEY:** The size of the boundaries, the population of the districts; there were some –

**MR. PEACH:** References.

**MR. FORSEY:** – references. Thank you, I say to the Member for Bellevue.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He is standing behind you.

**MR. FORSEY:** Yes, he has my back. Thank you.

In order to do it, sometimes it is nice to check what other provinces are doing. It is like forming an opinion. It is like voting on this. When you listen to other people's opinions, sometimes you pick up something that you did not think of maybe.

There is nothing wrong with that. That is why we debate legislation. That is why we had a unanimous decision yesterday in this House, Mr. Speaker. That is what makes the difference. When you can do that in this House of Assembly with all parties, I think it is a wonderful thing. What is wrong with it? Nothing.

In this particular piece of legislation we are talking about today, Mr. Speaker, we all agree over here and some of them agree over there. Until I listen to an argument that I can think about and say, well maybe, I never thought of that, but I have not heard it, not in the past couple of days. I have not heard it.

Mr. Speaker, it seems like the other side – when you are trying to speak and talk about a very important piece of legislation, there seems to be some type of squawking going on. I do not know why, but I will try to continue on with what I was trying to explain about the boundaries.

I listened to all the members. They are all very important issues that they talk about.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Honourable.

**MR. FORSEY:** Yes, and they are honourable, absolutely. To be in this House you are. We are all here for the same reason.

I am speaking from experience of the districts and the challenges. I listened to the Member for CBS. He did a very good job. I am sure he is very passionate about his district. He spoke yesterday. He did a very, very good job, as a matter of fact; however, like he said, he touched down in Lake Melville and Goose Bay, and he touched down in Churchill Falls.

Mr. Speaker, I just did not touch down in these areas. I travelled these areas so I know the challenges and I know the geography. Some of it is not easy, but when we take on a district, to be a representative of that district as a Member of the House of Assembly, then you know what you are getting into, or I would like to think you know what you are getting into.

I think this piece of legislation is progressive. It needs to come. It needs to be done. I applaud the Premier for taking the lead on it. We are, right now, getting ready for an election for 2015, but we want to get this done. It says that it will take 120 days to get it done once the commission is formed and the chair is put in place. They will bring back their requests, Mr. Speaker.

Whatever the recommendation is, when it comes back we have to live with it. Even though it says 2016 that the next review is supposed to be done, we are getting it done a few months earlier. Then it will be reviewed again in 2026, and ten years from there on, every ten years.

Mr. Speaker, the last time the boundaries were done I believe the Chair was the former Premier. I am not sure if he was the Chair, but he was certainly on the committee and I thought he was the Chair.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. FORSEY:** He was not the Chair? He was a committee member.

He was certainly used to rural areas because my district is a rural area. Then again, the former

Premier, who was a part of that committee, was also the MHA for the District of Exploits, which I represent today.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** (Inaudible).

**MR. FORSEY:** Thank you very much, I say to the Member for Terra Nova.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I will finish by saying we do support this piece of legislation. It is time to move forward and make the changes that need to be done. The commission will make their report. We have no influence on what they are going to come back with. We will move forward progressively and do what is right for the Province.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour to rise in this debate and to speak on this important debate. It is interesting to listen to other people speak and give their perspective on this issue as well, because if there is anything good that is going to come of this rushed debate I think it is the fact that we will all think a little bit more about this important issue of how we organize ourselves in the House, how we determine the boundaries and the rules for how we elect MHAs. It is a good process to go through a debate like this and give everyone an opportunity, a chance to have a good constructive debate and to listen to what everyone has to say and get their perspective.

Of course, just for the people who may be watching, we are in the second reading phase of this bill now. This is the stage of the bill where we talk about the principle of the bill, do we agree with the principle that is espoused in the bill? This is what we determine here. We have a bit of a wider ranging discussion in the second reading stage of the bill than we would in the

committee stage of the bill where we have to be more specific and where we have to focus directly on the clauses in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the types of amendments that come forward in this stage I guess are usually related to the hoist or to send it to a committee, but there are also some reasoned amendments. I may move a reasoned amendment to this bill as I progress.

As I was saying, this is an important bill. It is about how we govern ourselves, how we set the rules for how this Legislature operates. It is going to be in place for a number of years, so I think it is important that we get it right because it is very difficult to go back over it again to change things if we get it wrong. It is important that we get it right when we do it this time, Mr. Speaker.

What we decide here today will have an impact on other things in the House as well. For example, the Premier, I think, has announced that he is going to – the committee was struck today, the Standing Orders Committee. The number of legislators we have in this House sort of influences the nature of the committee structure we could have in this House. It is all sort of related as to how this House operates and what we can do. It is a very important act that we are dealing with here today.

We should not look at it from, how does it impact us individually in our seats? A number of people have said we should be looking at it as, what is best for the Province? What is the best way we can set it up to govern ourselves? So, those are some of things we should be taking into account.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when you look at elections acts or electoral boundaries acts, or acts to appoint the Chief Electoral Officer, there is a lot of sensitivity around this type of legislation because it relates to fairness and the legitimacy of the government. In that regard, usually governments when they bring in legislation to change these things, they do not use a heavy-handed method. Usually they allow for a fair and open debate where people can have lots of opportunity and lots of time to have their say. For example, it is very rare for a government to bring in closure on this type of legislation

related to an elections act because it sort of recognizes that to do so would be heavy handed. That is sort of an aspect of this type of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit more about a concept in the study of politics or political science that people use. It is the concept of a level playing field, or fair play some people call it. It is a very simple concept and it is a concept that is used in sports. I know a number of people around here in the House have participated in sports, and it is sort of the same thing.

The idea is that the field is level and one team is not playing uphill and the other one coming down. It is that everyone has a fair chance to participate in an election and they have a fair chance of winning. That is an important concept, because at the end of the day whoever becomes government has to have legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate. They have to say things were done fairly here; whoever won is legitimate. When a government brings forward amendments to make changes they have to be sensitive to that fact, Mr. Speaker.

We need to be very careful about the way we chip away at our democratic government. We have to be very careful and very protective about the democratic system we have. We all are aware of countries around the world where the governments use the power of the government to perpetuate themselves in power. Many people in these countries look to Canada, look to places like Newfoundland as an ideal, as a way that they should be doing business and running their governments. We should be very careful if we chip away at the type of democracy we have here that is the envy of the world.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation has come forward very quickly. Just last week this started to be floated around. Just on Thursday or Friday we saw the legislation, the initial piece of legislation, and knew what we would be dealing with. Here we are in the House, Thursday, a few days later making decisions about it. Some people have raised the questions about fair play. Do we have the time to examine this piece of legislation in a responsible manner? Do we? I am not sure. I am not convinced that we have.

Mr. Speaker, in that limited time frame, one of the things I have tried to do is talk to as many people as I can about this piece of legislation, to get their views on it, to find out what they are thinking. Many people have sent e-mails to me. I have talked to a number of people in person. Facebook messages, all kinds of things like that – I have had discussions with people that way. I have read commentary in the newspaper that people have brought forward as well, so we have had a lot of discussion.

Some of the things I have been hearing, Mr. Speaker – the first thing I want to mention because I guess this is an interesting piece. It seems to be the agreement of all parties, maybe all members – I am not sure – in this House that we agree on reducing the number of seats. Where we disagree is the process for doing that.

We have all seen the polls that have been sponsored by various media outlets that seem to indicate that as well, Mr. Speaker. I think parties in the House support some form of reduction in the number of seats. Others, while they support the reduction, they want to ensure that it is done in the proper way and that the proper process is followed and that it is done in a timely fashion. People have been telling me that.

Mr. Speaker, others are very skeptical about what is happening here. They think it is sort of a very heavy-handed way by a government to sort of try to perpetuate themselves in power by manipulating the system. Some people have told me that is their view on it. Others have made the case that we do not need to cut any members at all. Some have gone so far as to say that we need to add members.

For example, Kelly Blidook, a political science professor at MUN – by the way Kelly Blidook is an expert; he spent his life studying Legislatures. He has written several books, presented at international and national conferences, speaking about Legislatures. So what he thinks is important; I think it is worth listening to what he has to say. We may not agree with it, but it is worth listening to what he and others have to say on this topic.

His comments are that if we reduce the number of legislators, it makes it more difficult to put in

place a workable committee system. The other thing with committee systems is the ratio of so-called private members or backbenchers to Cabinet ministers in a Legislature. Those are other things that impact on the ability of a Legislature to put together good working committees of the Legislature.

That is one of the concerns that I have and that Kelly Blidook has as well about the way we are going about cutting these seats, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has proposed that we look at cutting the number of Cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries. I think that is directly related to lowering the number of seats because, unless we do that, the possibility of putting in place workable committee systems in this House is very difficult to achieve.

Another professor at Memorial, Chris Dunn, has studied Legislatures as well.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Relevance.

**MR. REID:** Relevance?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. REID:** Okay.

Mr. Speaker, another professor at the university, Christopher Dunn, he is another person who has studied Canadian Legislatures. He talked about this difficulty as well. He spoke out on Open Line shows and talked about the problems that it may make in having a workable committee system.

Another professor at the university, Russell Williams, has sort of indicated the possibility of court challenges to what we are doing here today. That is another possibility that we should consider as we are looking at this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of people contact me as well; former students have contacted me. For example, one –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. REID:** Yes, you should tell us what he said. I do not know if you read any cartoons recently.

One former student likened this case to what happened in the 1930s and 1940s. We were in a financial crisis then. What happened then was a little more dramatic than what we are doing here today, but the person who contacted me to express his opinion said that what we are doing here today is very similar to what we did in the 1930s and 1940s when they voted to do away with politicians in this Province all together. Some people are likening this situation to what happened then. I am not sure if it is similar, but it is an idea that the democracy is being traded off for some sort of financial savings.

Those are some comments I have heard, and there is a divergence of views on this issue, of course, Mr. Speaker. I also get the sense that public opinion on this issue is still fairly volatile. People are beginning to focus on this. They are beginning to become more informed and to get a better idea of exactly what is happening. So, this is a very important topic.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, when he introduced this legislation, talked about the process. He talked about the history of the legislation. It was an interesting read, but he left out a number of important points I believe. As I listened to him, I was sort of compelled to sort of say, so how long did – he was telling about the 1996 process. I asked him, how long did that process take? Does anyone know how long that took? It was not within the 120 days.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. REID:** Pardon?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Clyde Wells.

**MR. REID:** Yes.

It was not within the 120 days. It was not even within twice that, Mr. Speaker. It was close to three years that it took to bring about the report – three years.

How many hearings did they have? They had about thirty hearings in the first round. They presented a report, went back and did further hearings, another forty hearings. The process is very important, and it links back to the fairness. It links back to the idea and the concept of a level playing field, Mr. Speaker.

So, I guess the question is not whether or not we can do the consultations within 120 days. The important question is can we do it properly within the 120 days? That is the important question. On an important issue like this with the sensitivity around it, the question is can we do it properly within 120 days?

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this is the stage where we introduce amendments that sort of allow us to have a little more debate on this topic. So I want to move an amendment to the legislation, move an amendment to this bill at this stage, seconded by the Member for Humber East.

The amendment reads: That all words after the word “That” be deleted and the following be substituted thereafter: “This House declines to give second reading to Bill 42, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act because the commission has not been provided with a potential range for the number of districts, a matter best left to the commission’s discretion after research, examination and meaningful public consultation, to provide for fair distribution of electoral representation.”

Seconded by the Member for Humber East.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The House will take a brief recess to consider the amendment.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We have considered the amendment put forward by the Member for St. George’s – Stephenville East. It is a reasoned amendment and, as we know from past experience in this House of Assembly, many reasoned amendments are found not to be in order, as is the case with this one.

I would refer the member to O’Brien and Bosc, page 750. In one of the sections it states a reasoned amendment “must not relate to particulars of the bill if what is sought may be accomplished by amendments in committee.” It is on that rationale that we have declared the

amendment not to be in order; however, the member has speaking time left.

The hon. the Member for St. George’s – Stephenville East.

**MR. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the rationale for the decision on the amendment as well.

I just wanted to say that I think the Opposition has been reasonable in their approach to this debate. We have presented a number of reasonable amendments. We have not been obstructionist in terms of allowing this debate to happen in a timely manner. We have been reasonable in the approach we have taken.

We have put forward a number of amendments and ways that we are going to approach this bill, but we have concerns about issues related to protecting the seats in Labrador. The members on this side of the House from Labrador have spoken on these issues and made their case. We think there should be a range of seats, rather than an arbitrary thirty-eight. We also think there should be implications if the 120-day time limit is not met.

We have been reasonable on our approach. I thank the House for their attention and consideration of the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a privilege to stand in the House this evening to debate Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act. Before I get into the meat of my discussion here, I would just like to comment on what the Member for St. John’s North talked about earlier this evening, before supper. He was talking about how looking at the history books and images in his mind of those who came before us and



sacrificed their lives for democracy, to put us in this position here tonight to be able to debate about democracy in a meaningful way.

I just want to let him know that those haunting images, we have those images as well over on this side of the House. I have them on my wall, Mr. Speaker. Both my grandfathers fought in the First World War. One of them was one of the ones who answered roll call the morning after Beaumont Hamel.

We are all here in this place to carry on from those who came before us, to stand on their shoulders to make sure that we do protect democracy, not only for ourselves but for our child and our children's children. The blood of these people runs through the veins of everybody in this House, I would suggest. We all have those images and all of those pictures on our walls. We are all here for the right reasons. Mr. Speaker, there is no monopoly on that. We all feel that way, and I just wanted to make reference to that.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act, for the people at home, I just want to get into it. I will stick to the text that is important to what this debate is all about. It is important to understand what we are doing and why we are doing this and why government has brought this forward at this place and time.

The Premier has been on record supporting reform in the House of Assembly. Last year, during the leadership race that we had within our party, he talked about that many times openly, and so did the other party leaders as well. They talked about reform within the House of Assembly.

The reform that was talked about over the last twelve months is something that many of us – again, it resonated with many people, not only here in the House but people in the Province. The three areas of reform in particular our Premier talked about were modernizing procedures in the House of Assembly – again, not unique, no monopoly around that. There were thoughts around committees in the House, more committees.

Yesterday was a prime example of moving forward on that agenda, and I think it was great

co-operation that we saw in the House of Assembly happen yesterday. I give credit to the MHA for St. John's Centre for bringing that motion forward. It was very meaningful. I think it is certainly representative of how we are evolving as a Province and a Legislature.

Most of the people here on this side of the House have only been recently elected in the last term or two, Mr. Speaker. So a lot of us are relatively new to politics and we like to see things evolve and change and we are all part of that, and that is what this is about.

So, modernizing procedures in the House, Mr. Speaker – he also talked about the review of the MHAs' pension reform. Mr. Speaker, again, this is something that needs to be done. We have heard from the people –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the minister to speak to Bill 42.

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Absolutely, here we go. So my next line, Mr. Speaker, was reduction of electoral seats with fewer MHAs. That is where I was going with this, Mr. Speaker. I will stick to the bill and make sure that I do speak directly to it, going forward. If I stray a little off, please feel free, as you will, to come to me and let me know.

Again, all political parties agree that reform is important, if not desirable. Feedback from the people of the Province has been consistent around that as well. I heard a member opposite earlier talk about he is hearing from people that they are not onside with these changes. Well, we are hearing it out there, Mr. Speaker. I have to be honest with you; I believe that the people of the Province like what we are doing, the majority of the people agree with what we are doing, and certainly again the other House Leaders have talked about making sure that happens as well. So, Mr. Speaker, the political will exists within the Province to make these changes, and we are here to make those changes through this bill.

The Premier has taken leadership on this issue, and our caucus and our party are behind him 100 per cent in making this happen in this time and this place. We believe that all three areas of

reform are achievable, and they are achievable in a timely way. I will get into that more in a few more minutes. So the question is: Why wait? The question is: Why not get on with it? That is why we are here. Everybody pretty much supports it. Everybody pretty much supports reform. Everybody is on that page.

The first step would be to reduce the number of electoral districts. This is something that was going to happen in 2016 anyway. Mr. Speaker, it is not unusual for a statutory review to take place before the set date. We are just going through an ATIPP review of our legislation. That stat review was scheduled to be in 2016. We pushed it ahead approximately a year, Mr. Speaker. That is not unusual. That happened on numerous occasions in the past. We are not setting any precedent by doing that, and moving forward on this stat review is important as well.

If we make changes now we can save millions of dollars. We talked about the financial implications about what that could have.

**MR. JOYCE:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER (Cross):** The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands, on a point of order.

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, in this Legislature we always try to put the facts forward. The minister just mentioned a statutory review under the Freedom of Information. It is because of how the government fooled up Bill 29, not because it is part of the mandatory. It is because they were forced to do it, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, as I was so rudely interrupted a minute ago on a non-point of order, this brings us to what we are doing today. In order to facilitate electoral reform before the 2015 provincial election –

**MR. A. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I believe it is any member's right in this House to stand on a point of order. Even if it is not a point of order, it is unparliamentary for the member to suggest that he was rudely interrupted. I would ask that he withdraw the comment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, I did not mean that in a condescending way. I meant it in a jocular way. I hope you take it that way. If you take any offense to that, Mr. Speaker, I do apologize to the member opposite. It was more in a jocular sense, not in an emphatic sense. I did not know he was so sensitive.

Again, the act provides for the Newfoundland and Labrador electoral boundaries commission to be appointed every ten years. Under that current act, the next commission again is due in 2016. In 2016 they were told to look at forty-eight districts and divide the Province into forty-eight districts.

The amendments that our government are bringing forth here today are proposing to divide the Province into a specified number of districts in 2015. So we are going to do it this year. It will require the commission to begin its work as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, we think this can be done. Again, I am going to get into that in further detail in a few minutes, but the required present report within 120 days after the appointment of the chairperson here.

Mr. Speaker, the reality here is that we are following a well-established process. This process is established in law. It is established in legislation, and we are following exactly that process. We are changing a few things. We are moving this review forward by several months from 2016 to 2015, but the process itself is intact. The integrity is there and the intent is there, Mr. Speaker.

The commissions have been given similar direction in the past, exactly what we are doing here now. In 1973, in 1983, in 2003, 2006, direction was given through legislation to direct a commission to a specified number of seats. So we are not setting precedent here. Although other people do say that we are, we are not. We are following convention. We are following practice. This is nothing different than has happened in the past. It is important that people at home understand that and get that.

In 1996, actually, Mr. Speaker, is another story. I might get a chance to get into that. Something different happened then, but I am not going to go down that road for now.

With regard to the commission, it will be independent. That is important to note. It is going to be arm's length from government. The commission – as it has in the past – will be comprised of a chairperson. That chairperson will be appointed by the Chief Justice of Newfoundland and Labrador from among judges of the Newfoundland Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Trial Division, as well as four other members will form that commission.

These four members will be nominated from the three parties in the House who will be appointed by the Speaker. To complete that work the act will give the commission the ability to employ such resources as required. Technical and professional staff will be employed. The work will be done. There will be a cadre of learned commissioners and highly skilled staff doing this work.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Like a cadre. No, cadre. Cadre, Mr. Speaker, is c-a-d-r-e.

We have an independent commission. We have direction for the commission as to the number of seats, as well as direction that will be given to the amendment as to the timelines.

We talked about timelines. I have heard members opposite talk about timelines at length. Can this be done in the right way in this amount of time? The amendment is proposing a time frame of 120 days after the chairperson has been appointed.

The members on the opposite side say that is ambitious. We have heard that. I say it is reasonable. I think everybody over here thinks it is reasonable. It can be done within that period of time. With five capable people on the commission, supported by a team of professional people as well, we think this work can be done within that time frame. It is a four-month period. A lot of work could be done in four months with five people and the number of people supporting it.

Members opposite have cited other jurisdictions in Canada where at times it took longer; but, do you know what? We are in Newfoundland and Labrador. We can be up for challenges here to get things done; set some deadlines, get things done, and do it right. We have the competencies right here in this Province, and I have full confidence that we can pull this together, do it right, and do it in a timely way.

Mr. Speaker, I spent twenty-five years in private business. I was a senior manager with a major corporation. We did a lot of work here in this Province. We had distribution systems set up. I was the sales marketing manager for that. I was also responsible for profit and loss with the company. I had major responsibilities for the last ten years that I was with the company.

We were a major manufacturing company and we distributed goods throughout the Province, Mr. Speaker. There were times we were given our marching orders by our corporate headquarters to say we want you to do this, big projects that needed to be executed on in terms of distribution, in terms of how to change our business to be more efficient, more cost-efficient, more effective.

Mr. Speaker, this is no different. When you are challenged to do the work – I look at private business, for example. There are many people on the opposite side of the House who come from that sector, who come from the private sector. When you are challenged in private business with timelines and work that needs to be done, you are professionals, you make sure that work gets done. You do it in the right way. You get the team around you that is required. You do the work that needs to be done. You do the due diligence. Timelines are there for a

reason, Mr. Speaker, because it will make sure that people have a goal and that goal is set.

Look at other jurisdictions in the country. We heard 900 days, 600 days, 400 days, and 500 days. Listen, do you know what? If you do not put timelines in place, some of these projects could go on forever if you wanted to. In business, you have timelines set. You can be efficient on how you spend your money. You can meet those timelines.

If I was told in business today that you have four months to come up with a plan, you have another five months to execute it, you have nine to do that. I would be shocked if I would look at my boss and say it is not doable. It cannot be done.

Mr. Speaker, it is just an analogy I would like to use around that. I think it is an important analogy to understand in this context, that we are running government. This is an important decision for the people of the Province. There are some understandings there, is this possible? Is this doable? It is absolutely possible. It is absolutely doable.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk a little bit about representation by population. The Member for St. George's – Stephenville East, I believe it is. Am I correct?

**MR. REID:** Yes.

**MR. CRUMMELL:** He was talking about representation by population. The basic democratic principle in any western democracy, and certainly in Canada, is one person, one vote. All votes should be counted equally. That is the basic premise of any democracy in the western hemisphere, for sure, and everybody understands that equality.

Mr. Speaker, this concept has evolved. It has evolved in Canada – right back to the 1850s, as a matter of fact, if anyone wants to check out exactly the evolution of how one person, one vote evolved into what it is today.

In Canada today we have a different system of voting that allows for geographic considerations, Mr. Speaker. It allows for specific community considerations. We certainly see that in Torngat,

in Labrador; we certainly see it in rural parts of Canada when we look at the House of Commons and where we have a disproportionate amount of voters in one district, and then you go to the urban districts, there are more voters there. People in Canada accept that. They do get that.

By reducing the number of seats in the House of Assembly, I think the people in Newfoundland and Labrador will understand that as well. As an urban politician, as a politician that represents constituents here in St. John's, the needs of my constituents are definitely different than the needs in Torngat Mountains, are definitely different than the needs in Gander, and are definitely different than the needs in rural communities out around Newfoundland and Labrador.

We totally get that over here, and I know that the commissioners will totally get that. There is going to be leeway, and the direction will be given by convention to allow them some leeway – 10 per cent, 25 per cent, but in other instances they can go even above that. The constitutional challenges that we referred to earlier go down that road.

We know, for sure, that examples have been set in the rest of Canada. In terms of the Supreme Court decisions that have been met, challenges that have been met in the past, and all have failed, that allows for representation for rural districts with fewer people, and representations at different levels. So, Mr. Speaker, this is allowed in our democracy, this is allowed in Canada, and in Newfoundland and Labrador this has been recognized in the past.

So voters in this Province get that; voters in this Province understand that. We know that we are going to have discrepancies within districts. There are discrepancies now. There are some districts that have 3,000 people, and some districts have 15,000 people. My district has 12,000 or 11,000, Mr. Speaker. So we have that range right now, that variance now.

When you look at the other parts of Canada, when the average in New Brunswick is 15,000 people, when you look at other parts of Canada, when in Ontario it is 100,000 people for the provincial Legislature, we are talking about representation here at a different level. We are

still going to be one of the highest rates of representation, or the second highest anywhere in Canada for a province. So it is not changing much from that respect.

In terms of the work that we do as MHAs, I am a minister of the Crown and also I look after my district. I know that some of the people who sit in the backbenches here are also parliamentary secretaries. We all have extra work, but we still look after our constituents. I think we all do a very good job, Mr. Speaker. So we are up for that challenge. I think everybody in this House is up for that challenge –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** – and listen, if you want to get something done, you find a busy person. I am a firm believer in that, and I think we are up for that task, and I think the competencies and capabilities of the people of this House are there. So that can happen very easily, Mr. Speaker. So when it comes to that district breakdown, I think we are on safe ground.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take too much more time. I have a couple of points that I want to get out there, but there are a few important things that I want to get there just in closing. Again, we are simply expediting a process that was supposed to happen in 2016. We are going to do it in 2015. That is simply what we are doing here, Mr. Speaker.

Reform of the House of Assembly will have benefits for the people of the Province for many reasons, and financial certainty is an important one. It is setting an example for other work that we are going to have to do over the next few months, and this is where it has to start. That is one of the reasons why we are going down this road, and financial reasons is an important one, but it is just one of the reasons of many.

The people of the Province will continue to have fair representation, like I just alluded to, and will still measure among the best in the country in terms of the number of residents per member.

All political parties will be impacted by the reduction of seats. There is no benefit to the

people sitting over here – as a matter of fact, there are going to be some tussles before this is all said and done in terms of nominations, I am sure, when everything fleshes out at the end of the day. So we will be impacted as well, Mr. Speaker. We will have impact in our jurisdictions, in our districts, going forward and there is no doubt about that. Impacts will be happening to ourselves as members as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, just to close, all political parties here believe that reform is important. That is the place we are right now. That is the place where I think the people of the Province are. Why not make it happen now? I think we are ready for it. We are up for the task.

Thank you very much, and I am going to be voting for this amendment.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I am honoured to stand in the House tonight to speak to Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act on behalf of the District of Virginia Waters. As many people in this House of Assembly know, the District of Virginia Waters I believe is actually –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** – the third largest district in the Province as it sits today, so it gives me great pleasure to stand here and speak on behalf of every one of the constituents who I represent. I am very humbled with that opportunity.

I think, Mr. Speaker, one thing that is consistent without a doubt from our side of the House, the government side of the House, and it has been referenced here in many speeches that have already been made as part of this debate, is that part of why we are here is to ensure that the Province is provided and the people of the Province are provided with the best governance possible.

That governance certainly cannot come unless you have a very in-depth discussion and dialogue when you are making changes or suggesting making changes to the boundaries of the Province and, more importantly, the representation of the people of the Province. I think it is a very humbling experience, as the Minister of Education mentioned earlier. It is humbling to stand here in the House and speak to that. I think many of us, as parents, understand that the laws that we make in this House of Assembly and the decisions we make affect those of us who are coming in the future, and I am very humbled to stand here and speak to this bill tonight.

The democracy that is intended to happen in this House of Assembly is very important, and as an MHA I take that responsibility very seriously. I have a tremendous amount of respect not only for my fellow colleagues, but certainly for the ministers of the Crown who wear a heavy burden, and certainly all of us in this House of Assembly understand that the work that is done here, while oftentimes can be humorous as we have our debate, the seriousness of the work I do not think is lost on any of us. It has been referenced many times in the House.

I am also very confident that the members on both sides of this House are listening intensively to all of the discussion that is happening around this debate. I think the members of this House of Assembly on both sides understand that these discussions will have important and impactful ramifications on the people of the Province, and this is something that we take very seriously in our responsibility here as forty-eight elected members.

Mr. Speaker, I have to reference back to the beginning of the debate when my hon. colleague for Burgeo – La Poile suggested that the discussion on this bill and government's action appear to be rushed. One of the things that certainly has happened since last Thursday when the Premier made his announcement about his intention to reopen the House, invite the MHAs to come back in and debate this important piece of legislation, was that it required all of us, all forty-eight of us, to spend a tremendous amount of time preparing for this debate.

Like my colleagues on this side of the House of Assembly who have spent hours and hours with our researchers pouring over information and trying to get an even better handle on the historical implications of what has happened in the past around boundary changes, I am confident that the members on the opposite side of the House, I am sure, have represented their constituents with that same due diligence.

As we have gone through that process over the last four or five days I can certainly speak to – as a Member of the House of Assembly who is going to celebrate her anniversary in a couple of months as being a first-year MHA, I can certainly say that in the last number of days I have been even more educated myself on the Electoral Boundaries Act. I have a much deeper appreciation. I believe, Mr. Speaker, those listening at home tonight would expect me to have a much deeper appreciation for not only the changes that government is proposing today, but also the implications of those changes, and that I should have a deeper understanding of the original bill that we are talking about amending. Also, they would expect me to have, and all of us to have, a much deeper appreciation for the operational implications of the changes that we are talking about today.

I listened earlier in the debate and feverishly took notes. I know many of my colleagues in the House of Assembly on both sides of the House listen and take notes as we have discussions. I listened to the Minister of Finance talk about this legislation and amendment, and what Bill 42 is intent on doing is not really fundamentally changing the process. He mentioned that this process – it is my understanding that it has been done six times before, and now this is the seventh time.

With all due respect to my hon. colleague across the way, I would suggest, though, and certainly feedback from people who have reached out to me, is that the seventh time is actually being done in an election year. For that reason people have questions because that is a fundamental change to the process. People are questioning what government's intention is and why they want to change it in the middle of an election year.

The minister, as well as the members opposite, who, I am sure, have done all their homework in prepping for the debate, have assured us on this side of the House that Elections NL would have sufficient time to do this debate; however, my question – and I would hope that at some point during this discussion the Minister of Finance, or the Premier, or the House Leader may be able to answer this question. I would hope that as we work through – assuming government uses its majority to make these changes – that the operational implications at Elections NL will not be so large and create such discord that the people of the Province who we represent here today will be impacted when they actually go to vote. I think that is a very serious consideration when we talk about changing the rules in how people are represented.

As I said before, this has never happened in an election year. It is interesting. I want to make it clear, and certainly many members of this House of Assembly, including my hon. colleagues on this side, including the Leader of the Official Opposition, have made it very clear that we support a review that would lead to a reduction in the number of MHAs who are sitting in this House.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I had the distinct honour to represent the people of the Province on a committee after Judge Green's report, the Members' Compensation Review Committee from May 2009 to October 2009. We had, as a committee, the opportunity to have consultations around the Province on the benefits package that MHAs are required to have here as part of their work in the House. I can tell you, even though it was not in our mandate at the time, the number of MHAs in the House of Assembly came up in almost every single one of those presentations at that time.

This discussion about reducing the number has been something that has been talked about in the public for a long period of time. The Leader of the Official Opposition has talked about it for over two years. The people of the Province expect us to make decisions in this House doing the appropriate due diligence. It is our belief on this side of the House that the current proposal, as it is presented in legislation in Bill 42, really is setting the boundary commission up for

failure with unprecedented deadlines and a predetermined ten-seat reduction.

The original legislation called for the boundary commission to begin its work in 2016. As has been spoken about many times in this House of Assembly already, the 2016 date would have provided an opportunity for the boundary commission to be able to avail, my understanding is, of the most current census information.

It was interesting, as I was doing my prep I came across a submission that was made to a former committee that said – and I could be wrong, but yes, my understanding is this was a submission made on behalf of the City of Mount Pearl. The submission says it would be more timely and effective if the timing of the review was to happen eighteen months after a census has been carried out by Stats Canada, and the new information from the census will be as current as is reasonably possible and would assist in determining more accurately the population of each district.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it was the deputy mayor at the time who said that. I do not have the exact quote here but I am sure people can check that out themselves.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** The deputy mayor or the Deputy Premier?

**MS C. BENNETT:** The deputy mayor.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** The Deputy Premier.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Oh yes, okay.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take up the last couple of minutes of my speaking time here tonight to talk about the comments that I have heard most of the members on the government side make. Many of them stood up with great confidence and talked about the fact that they believed the commission could do its work in a timely matter, and that the amount of time that was prescribed in this legislation will be sufficient. I would argue that this precognition, or this future sight that the government members have on the other side, the ability to know the future, quite frankly is flawed.

I would argue that the members seem to have an incredible ability to be able to see into the future. The people of the Province, when they think about issues like the expropriation of Abitibi and Humber Valley Paving taking place in one day, really question what happens when this government rushes.

One of the things I have learned as part of studying for this legislation is that every single jurisdiction in Canada that has been through a boundary change – the province that took the least amount of days to get their reports done was Ontario at 185 days. The province that had the highest duration of days just to complete the report was Quebec with five years. The numbers range from 275 days in PEI; 695 in Nova Scotia; 284 in New Brunswick; 185 in Ontario, as I have mentioned; 265 in Manitoba; 186 in Saskatchewan; 325 in Alberta; 275 in British Columbia; 275 in the Northwest Territories; and 250 in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, earlier the Member for St. John's West spoke about the nine-month timeline being reasonable. I would argue that in business, tight deadlines can be achieved by buying them and buying the results. As many members on the opposite side of the House have said many times, government is not business. Those numbers I just read out are the other provinces' amount of days they used to get the report done.

In addition to that, the days between when they had their election and when the report was finished, the lowest one is 380 days. That is Nova Scotia, a combined 1,000 days in Nova Scotia to finish this work. Because it is not just about making sure that the boundaries are drawn correctly, as I mentioned in my earlier comments, it is about making sure that, operationally, Elections NL can do its work.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance said earlier in this House being informed is much more important than a calendar date. I would argue that when you are speaking about democracy and you are trying to jam a schedule in such a short period of time, I think it is legitimate that constituents question why the urgency.

I understand that members on the opposite side of the House are all going to wave at me and say that this is about money and this is about the

amount of money that we can save. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am also getting legitimate questions that members of the public are saying, well, why isn't the Premier able to take action on things that he can do right now, which is the parliamentary assistants?

Bill 42 is really about changing how fast this work is done and people of the Province – and it is okay, the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services can laugh all he wants there about this, but this is quite a serious issue.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Seniors and Wellness.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Seniors and Wellness; oh right, he has been changed. That is right; they have changed a lot over there in the last year. The amount of money this government has wasted on changing Cabinet ministers and changing departments is something that we should be discussing.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the member to keep her comments relevant.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, this is a 20 per cent reduction in the seats in an election year. This is unprecedented. In addition to the work that I have done on the numbers, I am sure other members of this House of Assembly – I know for sure that members on my side of the House have taken the time to actually speak to people who have done this work. I have spoken to representatives of commissions in other provinces. As we have heard earlier this week, a former commissioner from Newfoundland said it was highly unlikely that this work could get done in time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** I spoke to another commissioner who said that to try to complete this work in this short period of time fundamentally means that government is disregarding the ability for people to have consultation and input into this discussion.



Mr. Speaker, let me be clear, I stand behind my leader and support him, as we all do, and everybody in this House, with the exception of the Third Party at this stage, has supported that we need to reduce MHAs; but how we do it is equally as important as the decision we are making. My constituents and people who have been talking to me are very concerned about this government's ability to get this done.

The Member for the District of Terra Nova said that this debate was about efficiency. I can tell you that my eleven-year-old son, when he heard that, said: Mommy, isn't this debate about democracy? I said: Yes, it is.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** (Inaudible).

**MS C. BENNETT:** The Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services can certainly mock the fact that my eleven-year-old is interested in politics, but I think it is very important because quite frankly when you look at the math, the changes we are making in 2015 will affect the boundaries that he will be voting in. We are making decisions today, as part of this House of Assembly, that will affect voters in this Province for eleven years. While it is important to take action, it is equally important to make sure that those decisions are done and done in the right way.

This government is grossly underestimating the operational work related to these changes. I would argue like they grossly underestimated the operational work when they laid off over 1,200 people several years ago.

Mr. Speaker, there are a litany of lists that we have asked questions about over the last couple of days regarding finances. I certainly will not waste my time this evening talking about that because I understand the members on the opposite side are very interested in continuing this debate.

I can certainly say that when a constituent talks about – and I go back to the parliamentary assistants and the number of ministers in Cabinet. I had to say to the constituent – I cannot imagine that what he said to me was right. That constituent said: Do you think this is the Premier trying to make sure that there isn't a caucus revolt? I said: Look, I cannot imagine a

person who sits in the Premier's seat would make a decision not to reduce parliamentary salaries –

**MR. SPEAKER:** I will ask the member to make her comments relevant to the Bill 42.

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

The Deputy Premier and the Premier have spoken about better governance. The people in my district are questioning the motive. They are questioning whether it is better governance, good governance, or quick governance. Mr. Speaker, people in the district, people across the Province, have grave concerns about the ability for us to get this work done and the government to get his work done.

So let me be clear. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Province expect this government to keep its word. Every single one of them stood up today, and in the last couple of days, and agreed and said that this was not about pushing off the election date. I hope when we come back in the House of Assembly the next time after we close from this session, I will be able to look across the hall and say that every one of them kept their word.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to assure my colleague across the way that I, for one, will be true to my words.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I speak for everyone on this side as well; what we say, we will accomplish. Let me tell you that. You have rhetoric coming out of your mouth, that is fine and we can deal with that.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight debating a tremendous change in the landscape

of political life here in this Province. The agent of that change is our Premier. I would say to the people opposite, be careful what you ask for, because I have been listening and I heard – tell me I am wrong – that the Leader of the Opposition had called for this. I am told maybe two years ago, I do not care when it was, but he asked for it.

I understand that the Leader of the Third Party was supportive and asking for it – even though I am not sure about that. I am wavering a little bit on that one. We have a Premier who has gaged support for this throughout this Province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Let me start with the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party, people in my district, and people in districts throughout this Province – tell me that it is not wanted. Stand up and tell me it is not wanted. I challenge them, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I go back to our Premier who looked and listened, heard and acted. A bold move, a very bold move, but one that I believe honestly the people of Newfoundland and Labrador support 100 per cent.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** The majority – obviously, there are petitions coming forward from staffers and others. I know there are people in this Province, there are people in my district, who are questioning this. There is no question about that. I say to the people of this Province, you have to –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** – in a leadership role – it is all right in Opposition, you can say anything, you can think anything; but when you are in government, you have to find a way to get things done that the people of the Province need to have done. I do not think there is anyone who can stand up and make a good argument that we cannot reduce this House and still be an effective House, a democratic House, a House

that represents every person in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I have gone through, myself, one of these exercises and let me tell you, it is not easy, Mr. Speaker. If everyone thinks that I am going to give up part of my district willingly, forget it. I value each and every one of the constituents that I have in my district.

In 1999, I was elected to represent Harbour Main – Whitbourne. In 2006, a decision was made to change the boundaries. I was disappointed, I was apprehensive, I was not accepting of the results, because I had worked very, very hard to represent Whitbourne, Makinsons, Clarke's Beach, and Brigus Junction. In 2007, I had to go back and I had lost those communities. They were gone elsewhere to two other jurisdictions.

So, Mr. Speaker, to stand here and say, oh, it is going to be easy and so on and so forth, it is not true. I feel for the MHAs, I feel for the constituents, but guess what? It came to pass; I got over my fit. I realized that those communities were well-represented elsewhere, they were accepting, and life went on. No different than what is going to happen when the boundaries are reset and we do have a general election in 2015. We are going to have that. It is going to pretty much fit into the original mandate of this government, which is four years. Whoever wins is going to be guaranteed four years – whether it is September 1, September 20, whatever it is, and life is going to go on. There are going to be less members in here, and that is what we are debating now.

I believe, honestly, that each and every one of us knows that is the right thing to do. So the problem is the timing. I heard some colleagues on both sides talking about the money part of it and the savings part of it, the efficiency part of it and that sort of thing, but the time has come in this Province for us to get this Legislature to a size that truly fits the population of our Province. It is something like, on average, 10,000 now. We want to get it up to 15,000, give or take 25 per cent or 10 per cent. So there is going to be great flexibility.

The debate now is that where will we lie after this, the number and so on. Then we are going to get a commission that is independent that is going to carry it out. I will tell you, those commissions work. I am sick and tired of hearing from the Opposition about New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and other jurisdictions. This is Newfoundland and Labrador. We are in control. We should know what we can do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** There is no way – if a Newfoundlander or Labradorian says they are going to do something and takes on that task, and it is the right person with the right qualifications, the job will get done. I can guarantee that. I will stand by that because the people will come from all the political parties –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Yes, jabber away because I have faith in you over there, believe it or not. You are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. You can talk about things that were not done, but you are not talking about things that we did accomplish in ten years. I am very, very proud of what was accomplished in the ten years or eleven years that we were here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I do not want to go down through the list because when I go down through the list, you say that is that and that and that, but that is not where I want to be.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I do not care what happens to me. Whether I get elected the next time, whether I do not run the next time, whatever, I will go out of this Legislature with my head held high, very proud of the accomplishments of this government.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Very proud.

I remember standing here one day, it was a stormy day in Labrador, December – I do not even know the date; I am not good at dates – and announced the Trans-Labrador Highway, be it under extreme conditions, was going to be opened.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the member to keep his comments relevant to Bill 42.

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I closed it shortly after because of the weather.

I understand, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is that you can accomplish great things with the numbers that we have; but whether it is forty-eight, forty-six, thirty-eight, if you have matched it up to make sure that everything is represented, every person in this Province is represented, you can accomplish great things as the government has done, like opening the Trans-Labrador Highway.

All I am saying is that we have laid out – and I have trust in this Legislature; at the end of this debate, I firmly believe that we will come to a consensus as to the number, as to the conditions, as to how we move forward. Then we will place it into the hands of what I believe will be a truly independent committee, headed up by an independent Chair who is going to look at the boundaries. The boundaries, once you get to that number, you will be able to, with the modern technology and so on, carry out what needs to be carried out, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the debate continues. I am very, very proud to say that I am part of it and that I will be fully supportive of it as we move through. Again, to get back to – and I sort of got sidetracked there, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly apologize for that; but you have to have a bit of passion in your body and you also want to make sure that you stay awake and I hope I woke up someone there, or got you on your toes.

Again I go back to changes. Since 1999 to this present day I have seen such a tremendous change in how we do business. Basically in 1999 when I came in, my ear was rang off in the

sense that all contact just about was with a telephone. Now if we get two or three calls a day, that is about it. Everything else is in e-mails or Facebook or whatever the case might be. Communications have changed. The ability to get around this Province is getting better with each passing year. We have the opportunity here to make sure that we take in all of those variables and continue to bring Newfoundland and Labrador into the twenty-first century and beyond.

During the last decade or so, we have led the way in Canada in many other ways, and I certainly would hope that what we do here will also make us a leader in parliamentary reform. Not only are we looking at the numbers, but also how we do business here, Mr. Speaker. It is very, very important, I say to you.

I hear from the other side that they are touching base with their constituents. I have to admit that there is not much discussion in my district concerning this. It is almost like a given. I have rooted around here and there as you usually do when you have anything on the floor of the House. I have gotten some e-mails on both sides of it, but it worries me to some degree. You often wonder is there some degree of apathy out there because even in the media and that it does not seem to be a contentious issue. It is just one that is moving through the books as it is almost a given.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that I have said my piece. I think I have gotten everything that I wanted to say. This Province has had a very rich history. I also would like to mention that I am old enough to remember when there were dual ridings here in this Province. One of the first campaigns that I worked on was Doody and Dawe out in the dual riding in, I think, Harbour Main – Bell Island. That was in my lifetime, obviously, in the early 1970s. I think there were a couple of others around the Province. I am not sure, but I think that was the last one of them.

We have gone from less numbers to more numbers. We are starting to slide backwards now. This Chamber is dynamic in that we have to be able to accept change, and not only accept it but make sure it happens at the most appropriate time. I like the timing of this one, by the way, Mr. Speaker, I really do.

The variable that is not talked about too much is the fixed election. I served from 1999 to 2003, about four-and-a-half years, and after that now it has been steady four years, four years, and four years. If you remember, there was an election in 1993, 1996, and 1999.

The fixed elections came in not so much, I guess, for any other reason but to make sure that no government had that control that they could politically call. I hear people talking about we brought fixed elections in for this reason, but my understanding was that it would take away the power of the government to call an election after three years or let it go to five years. You have to have your plans in place and so on and so forth. Any argument otherwise is really off the mark, I believe.

With the fixed elections the ten years must fit into it. That is something we have to consider now as we go forward to make sure that our review – is ten years going to be the one, or is it eight years or nine years? You know what I am saying. You need to do it and set it for the next time. That is something else that should be given some consideration. Like everything, you have to build into this Chamber the opportunity for periodic reviews to make sure.

The timing of this I like because I think, first of all, there is an appetite out there in the general public and in our political parties to get this done. Secondly, we can get it done within the period of time that has been mapped out. Obviously I will admit it is going to be pretty tight, but with regard to that I still believe firmly that with the co-operation of all and perhaps even a little bit of luck – because you always have to throw that in there. As we have learned even this January, you never know what is going to happen today in politics. The unexpected is the norm rather than the expected; there is no doubt about that.

I say, Mr. Speaker, the timing is good. We will get this done. A general election will be called, a new Chamber will be assembled, and for four years then we will go on. Naturally, you have to look at the fact that, yes, there are going to be some savings financially. I believe there are going to be more efficiencies. You are going to have to work on what kind of committee structure you have and that sort of thing to

match up with those numbers. I am sure all that will fall into place.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to leave it at that. I thank the House for giving me this opportunity. I will again reiterate my support for Bill 42.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SLADE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it is indeed an honour for me to be here representing the beautiful and historic District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

I have sat here, Mr. Speaker, and I have listened to the members opposite and I listened to the members on this side. Of course we all have points to make here. Like I said, I am indeed very proud to stand on my feet and bring some issue to Bill 42.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 42 is a piece of legislation that is meant to rearrange our political structure by changing electoral boundaries across our Province on both the Island and Labrador. It is important to point out the process is already in place that ensures electoral boundaries are reviewed and readjusted every ten years to reflect changes, if any. The next review was supposed to take place in 2016, only next year.

I did hear my colleague here earlier tonight from Virginia Waters. She was talking about a piece of work that came out of the 2006 district boundaries committee. It was about the same things I am going to say to you now. The process was supposed to happen in 2016, and of course it needed to happen. I heard the Member for Virginia Waters saying that at one point in time the deputy mayor of Mount Pearl put a submission into that committee.

He was saying at that time you need to be eighteen months out or whatever. In fact, he was not in favour of having it prior to the time. That is the point I am trying to make on it. He

was not prepared to do that at all, just for the simple fact that it was scheduled for the next year and he felt strongly that you will get better information. Mr. Speaker, 2016 is a census year, so then you would have the absolute truth on the numbers that actually are there.

Mr. Speaker, these reviews are meant to examine, amongst other things, whether or not reductions or an increase in the seats are needed based on many factors, especially our population. Given that our population is dropping, the general consensus seems to be a seat reduction for our Province would need to take place. It is not the merits of the seat reduction that is being largely debated. Not many disagree with at least an examination of reducing the seats, and therefore the members in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a debate really about reducing the seats. As members opposite would point out, they agree with it. We agree that there should be some seat reduction, or at least let it go to the commission and try to see if indeed they can do that. The other part of it is, of course, why would you put an arbitrary number on it of thirty-eight? Maybe it needs to be forty-two. Maybe the commission would come back and say less than thirty-eight. That is the other thing, but at least we gave that committee a broad, broad scope to be able to work within that, some being an arbitrary number, and I do not know why.

I would like to ask the question, why the number thirty-eight? Was there a reason for that? What was that based on? Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to know why that was done, indeed.

Most boundary reviews are often described as a difficult undertaking, challenging and complex. The new legislation permitted this review is dictating the number of seats that should be reduced, rather than allowing the commission to do this flexible work in coming to an appropriate seat number after they had consulted and studied the issue more carefully.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen some of the work here by this government. I will just mention Humber Valley, Bill 29, and things like that. It is important to have the consultation process. It

is important that we use every avenue we can as MHAs and legislators in this process.

What is troubling about this new legislation is that it only states public consultations will be limited. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a problem with that. We are here on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I am of the understanding there was going to be one public consultation down in Labrador and there was going to be one here on the Island.

There are many, many people in each and every one of our districts here who would like to have that opportunity to have a public consultation. I can assure you of that, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you I am very big on the issue of people not only in my district but in the districts of Newfoundland and Labrador, all over Newfoundland and Labrador. It is important we allow people an opportunity to have a public consultation with them. People have something to say here, Mr. Speaker. The forty-eight of us should not determine that these people not have the opportunity to have a chance to have that consultation.

Mr. Speaker, I am after hearing from a lot of my constituents, and some are in favour. Most are not in favour because it is the timing of it. What people are asking, of course, is why now? Why didn't you leave it until 2016 when you had the census for that time period? Why did you not do it at that point in time? People do not understand that. Mr. Speaker, I am after having many, many e-mails on the subject – many, many indeed.

When we talk about Bill 42, there are a lot of issues there. One, we want public consultations, certainly allowing people to have a say into what happens in this House. This House belongs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. You and I, Mr. Speaker, are only sent here to represent those people. What an MHA basically is, we are a servant of the people. That is what I intend to stand here as, Mr. Speaker, and every chance to have a public consultation should be given to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our democratic system is one of the most precious things we have to safeguard. Safeguarding it means we have to be watchful of

the ever most subtle forms of subverting our democratic system. First of all, by holding the review process early, the electoral reconfiguration is cutting short a normal non-partisan process for determining electoral seats.

The biggest problem I have, of course, is the – the minister who is supposed to be leading this file is supposed to be Minister Manning. I do not understand how this can be actually going ahead, Mr. Speaker. People have a right to have a say. People simply have a right to have a say.

Further, Mr. Speaker, democratic representation should not be based on old data. That is what I was referring to on the very first of it. Like the Canadian census –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. SLADE:** Mr. Speaker, the census would take place in 2016 also, giving us fresh, new information on exactly what the population of Newfoundland and Labrador actually is, and does it need to be rolled back. Do the seats need to be rolled back?

Again, like I said, everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador probably has an appetite for cutting and reducing the MHAs. This party over here is not disagreeing with that. It is the process that we are coming to, Mr. Speaker, because I firmly believe we need to take our time to do it, and do it properly. That is my firm belief.

As I said, I have had many, many conversations over the past week or so with many of the constituents in my district. Actually, some of them in yours, or close by yours. People do not understand why this government at this point in time – maybe the House should have been called back for an emergency meeting talking about the Budget, the shortfalls we are going to have in the Budget. The price of oil is dropping, and has dropped. Maybe we should have had that conversation.

Mr. Speaker, a bad process means bad results. A good process means good results. A bad process means hasty conclusions, very limited or no conclusions, limited examinations of the

issues. A good process means deliberations, detailed consultations, and issue examination.

Mr. Speaker, others question whether the timing of this has something to do with the government, whether it is to their advantage or it is not to their advantage if an election was held. I am after being questioned on that. We just do not understand where this is going.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to speak my full twenty minutes. I will sit down now. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you the people in Newfoundland and Labrador do need those consultations. They need the opportunity to have those consultations. Anything less than that is simply not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn):** The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a privilege and an honour for me to rise tonight and speak to Bill 42. I am very pleased to say that I strongly support Bill 42.

I have heard a lot from members opposite tonight about why has this come about now and why the sudden rush. There is no sudden rush. As members from this side of the House will speak in turn tonight, we are going to talk about what has happened in other provinces as well. What can be achieved in Newfoundland and Labrador by our strong, intelligent people is anything that we set our minds to, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to start out talking about – we heard tonight the Member for St. George’s – Stephenville East. I was a little confused because he seemed to be arguing somewhat about whether or not fewer seats are even needed. One thing I was absolutely certain of last week, based on the media coverage, was that all three parties were indeed in support of a seat reduction. In fact, I have right here a copy of a *CBC News* clip on January 12 that says “Slash 8 House of Assembly seats, says Dwight Ball”.

We just listened, it said Dwight Ball – and it is right here on January 12 on CBC, “Liberal Leader... says he loves the idea of reducing the number of seats...”.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, on a point of order.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I just ask that the member use the Leader of the Official Opposition. We know that we cannot use names.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS PERRY:** My apologies. All right, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He said, “...he loves the idea of reducing the number of seats...”. So we are all very much in agreement with that, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that has baffled me in the debate, and we just heard it again from the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, why put an arbitrary number on it? Why the number thirty-eight? To that question I counter, why the number forty – because their leader had obviously stated forty seats. So the difference between forty and thirty-eight is two.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** A point of order.

The hon. Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Again, I would just ask that if the member is going to refer to comments by the Leader of the Official Opposition, that she use the entire quote and saying that it could be forty, it could be more, it could be less, and it should be done by an independent commission. I just hope that it can be quoted properly here in the House. That is all.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS PERRY:** I am not quoting that quote verbatim (inaudible) verbatim starting at the opening of the quotation, “‘I’ve been on record as saying that I believe we can do it with 40 seats or less,’ said Ball.” It is a direct quote from the article, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the hon. member to not use proper names.

**MS PERRY:** I will put away the reference to the quotes now, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted to indicate that was indeed a factual media report from January 12.

So why is it okay for the Leader of the Opposition to say forty or less, and they do not argue, but if we say thirty-eight they argue? I just find it a little bit baffling, and I am at a loss to understanding some of the logic there.

Moving on, all political parties are going to be impacted by the reduction of seats in the House of Assembly. This is not about politics; this is very much about the fiscal situation that we find ourselves in in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador today. It is not a fiscal situation that any of us saw coming.

As the Minister of Finance eloquently pointed out today, this time last year our economy was doing very well. This time last summer our economy was doing very well. No one, globally, saw the fall in oil prices coming to the extent that it has. As a government, we have a responsibility now to address the shortfall that we are going to be finding in our Budget. To do anything else, Mr. Speaker, would be completely irresponsible, in my opinion.

The Member for Virginia Waters, during her speech, questioned what the intention is of moving with this bill now. I would say, Mr. Speaker, two, three months ago we were all here, and I will bring everyone’s memory back to sitting in the House and the constant, frequent calls for when is the financial fiscal update going to come. We were not able to deliver that until we could really pin down what was happening.

We delivered the update in early December. The oil prices continued to slide past that date, Mr. Speaker. Now we are in even a more dire

fiscal situation as the price of oil continues to plummet. We have to address that shortfall. I personally and strongly believe the very best place to start is to look at ourselves and to look at the efficiencies that have to be found. Why not start with ourselves, especially when everyone is in agreement?

This would not have come about, Mr. Speaker, probably with such urgency if there was not a severe Budget deficit problem that we face. The member indicated, do not do it now; it is an election year.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS PERRY:** Do not do it now because it is an election year, but that is what is probably bothering them, I do not know.

It is not about it being an election year, Mr. Speaker, as I said just now. This will impact all of us, all parties, and probably not in good ways. We have a responsibility to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and \$10 million is no small chunk of change; \$10 million on the face of it, and we have not even factored in what the cost of the accrued pensions would be, so I would venture to say \$10 million is a very conservative figure in terms of the actual savings that will be realized as a result of the cost-saving measures. We are sure going to be looking at all aspects of the House of Assembly and all aspects of government, as our Premier has clearly indicated to us.

The severe Budget deficit is the reason this has come about, Mr. Speaker. In order to have this in place in time for the next election, we must address getting the committee in place today, because there is time to do it and we can have this done in time for October 2015.

When I look at all the hoist motions that have already taken place and will continue to take place, and as the Member for St. Barbe told us in our last sitting, it costs \$22,000 a minute, I shake my head at why are we continuing to drag it out. To me, there is an intentional effort to drag this out through the hoist efforts. That, in turn, is maybe their intention, to slow down the committee process so it cannot be done before



the next election. I do not know. We are all trying to figure out angles. What is their angle? I do not know.

I have to say that I cannot figure out why all of a sudden now they seem to be opposed to cutting seats. The global challenges that are facing the world as a whole makes it absolutely imperative in my opinion that we find cost savings, and that includes the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at workloads for MHAs across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I think probably that is one of the reasons why maybe all of us agree there is recognition that there is a difference. I look at the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and the Member for Torngat Mountains, and I consider them similar to myself in terms of the geography that we have to cover, the vast number of communities that we have in our various districts.

For example, my former colleague, a former minister in the House, Dave Denine, him and I would often chat about the difference in our workloads; the difference in his district versus mine; how much he had to do versus what I had to do; how long it took him to travel his district versus how long it takes me to travel my district. He could walk, Mr. Speaker, he told me, from one end of his district to the other in one hour.

In contrast, if you look at Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune it takes three days to travel my district and then I am only in and out; I am not spending any amount of quality time with people because the geography is so very spread out. Another difference that I would say that we face, as rural members, we do not have the Confederation Building within walking distance or within a half-an-hour drive.

A lot of people in cities, in my opinion, are quite capable and do come directly to the various government offices and resolve problems on their own. In contrast, in rural areas like where I am situated, we are government, we are the Department of Health, we are the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, and we are the Department of Education. Any person who has an issue with any department often comes to our door. We are very happy to help them in

any way, shape, or form we can; but my workday, I would challenge, is much longer.

When the House of Assembly is open, Mr. Speaker, myself and I am sure members from other rural, remote areas like me, we go home on Fridays. It takes us all day to get there. We spend Friday nights travelling our district, meeting with constituents. We spend Saturdays and Saturday nights doing the same thing. We spend Sundays driving back to town.

I have, in the last seven years, often worked eighty consecutive days straight, Mr. Speaker, something I thoroughly enjoy doing, something I hope to continue doing for a great deal of time longer, because I really enjoy the difference that we make in people's lives by helping them resolve their individual problems. I am sure that my former colleague would say to me, I could take 5,000 more people easily and my workload would not change significantly.

Do I think there is room for fewer seats? Absolutely. Do I think we should look at urban areas as well as rural? Absolutely. Now, of course, we have to factor in all of the constitutional issues and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which guarantees every citizen the right to vote. As the Minister of Finance talked about the other day, parity of voting power has been found to be of prime importance for effective representation as required by the guarantee under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There is a provision for a 10 per cent variance and in some cases a 25 per cent variance. Of course, in the case of Torngat Mountains it is closer to 50 per cent. There is recognition of geography. There is recognition of unique histories, cultural differences, historical ties, and community interaction, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at how some of the boundaries are lined, it baffles me how some members in the same town – one member has this side of the street, another member has that side of the street. Certainly, more efficiency can be found and we can look at ways of grouping those populations to be better served, Mr. Speaker, by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The question I would ask when the members opposite say to us, why rush?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS PERRY:** The question I would challenge and counter to that, Mr. Speaker, is why wait? We know we are in a dire financial situation. We know we are going to be looking for about at least half a billion probably in savings that have to be found to make things more efficient.

You might say, puff, \$10 million across the way. They say what is \$10 million? You do not need to save \$10 million. Yes, we do, Mr. Speaker; \$10 million saved from salaries and pensions in the House of Assembly is much better spent in my opinion, and I feel quite strongly about it, on lifesaving cancer drugs. It is much better spent on keeping our community youth networks in place, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS PERRY:** All right. I am tying the boundary seat back to the Budget. Because the reason we are here today discussing the boundary change prior to October 2015 is because it is very important, one of many very important cost-cutting measures that have to take place if we are going to guide our Province successfully and prosperously through tough fiscal times. That is the situation we are in today, Mr. Speaker, tough fiscal times.

Every penny we can find that will have minimal impact on the services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is where we are going to look first, Mr. Speaker. We know we are all strong people on both sides of the House; everyone here is a good representative for their district. We know that as our districts grow and change we will continue to be excellent representatives for our districts, Mr. Speaker, so this will have very minimal impact on the services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will continue to excel in the service we provide to them as MHAs. In my opinion, this is one of the very best places to start looking for some of these cuts.

The longer we stay here in the House of Assembly, the longer it is going to take to get the committee in place. I do worry sometimes that there may be an intentional hoist to keep us here longer to slow this down. That I think is very irresponsible. The people of this Province are entitled to have a government that is efficient and effective and gets down to business and focuses on the task at hand, and I for one strongly believe –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask all hon. members on both sides of the House if we could have some attention to the speaker. The speaker has something important to say, and I ask all hon. members to give her the respect she deserves.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS PERRY:** I was told I was going to get heckled a lot before I stood up, Mr. Speaker.

I strongly believe that we must do this before the election, Mr. Speaker, because if we do not, who is to say when it will get done. In 2019, hypothetically, yes, but a lot of things can happen over that time. Do you know what? Maybe by 2019 oil prices will be back, we will have identified new industries, and our economy will be stronger than ever. If the public of Newfoundland and Labrador at that time come to government and say we want more representatives, I am sure the government of the day will certainly contemplate that, Mr. Speaker.

From the discussions I have had with most people, there is absolutely full agreement. Do you know what? There is probably a little bit of room to save some money in the House of Assembly. When we get to the Budget, Mr. Speaker, talk about it being an election year; do not do this in an election year. A lot of times you hear in an election year that there is going to be an election Budget. This year, Mr. Speaker, I do not think we are going to see an election Budget.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the hon. member we are speaking to Bill 42.

**MS PERRY:** Back to the Budget again, okay.

I tie my comments back into Bill 42 again, Mr. Speaker, because this bill and why we are here today has come about in large part because we are attempting to tackle the Budget in the most prudent, fiscally responsible way. We believe we can start doing that right here in our own House. To do anything else, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, would be totally irresponsible.

I am absolutely strongly in support of this bill. I am absolutely confident that thirty-eight representatives in the House of Assembly will represent the constituents of Newfoundland and Labrador to the very best of their abilities and the people will see no decline in services. They will, however, have the opportunity to hopefully argue to be able to keep something in health care or keep something in another area of the Budget because of the savings we will be realizing from these thirty-eight seats.

Bearing in mind of course, like I talked about a little while ago, workload and efficiencies, right now I do believe there is a disparity. Rural members I think sometimes have a much heavier workload. Looking to my district, I have fourteen municipalities, I have fourteen fire departments, and I have three ferries, for example. Again, being the one person who represents all departments in a region, as compared to some urban members who have no fire departments, no potholes, and no roads.

All of this needs to be taken into consideration, I believe, by the commission. Workloads, population, and cost are all very important. We will find efficiencies in the House of Assembly. There will be more to come in terms of efficiencies in the House of Assembly. This I do believe is a great start, very responsible.

We are listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who have long talked about there probably being too much fat in the House of Assembly. We are tackling that issue, Mr. Speaker. We are doing it responsibly. We look forward to the support of members opposite to make sure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador do not have to suffer unnecessarily

with Budget cuts because we are looking at our own House first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I listened quite intently to the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune in her debate and what she had talked about. It sounded like she felt she had an overburdened, heavy workload representing the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

I represent a rural district as well. I have thirty-five communities that I represent; eleven municipalities, fourteen unincorporated communities, and ten local service districts. It is scattered over a large geographical area, but I am very happy. I am very proud to represent the people, and that the people of The Straits – White Bay North selected me to be their voice. I am the youngest Member of the House of Assembly, still in my twenties.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I think we have a lot of diversity in this House, spanning a lot of years, urban, rural, gender, and culture. That is what is really important. We all bring differing views sometimes because we are representing different geographical areas. We are that voice from that particular area. What I bring forward today will be speaking from the perspective of the district, from a caucus perspective on what we have put forward.

I was in the building in the early hours on Friday – before this announcement came down that Bill 42 on election boundaries would be put before the House of Assembly – not knowing I would be returning in just a few hours after I had left. This is the commitment that you take as a member. You are representing the people. No

matter how short the notice is or what the call, you have to rise and answer that call.

A lot of members here have talked about social media, talked about technology, and how technology improvements can help us do our job better. Those who know me know I like Twitter. On Friday morning I found out that the House of Assembly would likely open next week, Friday morning on Twitter through a news outlet saying that the House would likely open and we will have legislation on this. I was on an airplane at the time I got that message. I managed to get off that airplane so that I could be here and represent the people of The Straits – White Bay North and put forward that view.

Technology is a wonderful thing. I remember having conversations with past members who represented my district, Ed Roberts being an example, and how back in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s the population was higher on the Great Northern Peninsula. We have seen a lot of poor policy decisions made by this particular government that have not created the economy that is needed to bolster that population growth. It is not just the Great Northern Peninsula; there are many other areas of the Province.

Getting back to technology and how it has changed, the former MHA, Mr. Ed Roberts, used to draft letters and sometimes that would take days. Now things are communicated pretty instantaneously. People want access to their MHAs more and more and so they should.

We have e-mail, we have Facebook, we have Twitter, and we have other alternatives of which we reach out. By doing that and by the technological advancements that exist, the expectation of being able to respond quicker is there as well. That also increases the expectation of the constituent. Whether you have a small number or a large number, that workload is there. With the technology advancement or not, you are still going to continue to see an increased level of work that is going to be put forward by an MHA, all MHAs, whether they represent a rural district, or whether they represent an urban district, or whether they represent Labrador.

Some of the biggest challenges that we still face, though, when it comes to technology is that

technology is not equal. You can look at some of the rural districts very close to the metropolitan area that do not have cell coverage. There are areas very close to the city that do not have high-speed Internet. There are over 200 still in Newfoundland and Labrador that do not have that access right now. There are a lot of people. There are limitations.

I can go into the community of Conche and be unreachable for that day because there is no cell coverage. There is no way for people to reach me or if I go into Croque. You are off the grid and that happens for other people. That was something that was talked about. I wanted to put the technology piece out there.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune said we are debating this legislation, Bill 42, and it is going to impact all parties. Her words were: probably not in good ways. Those were her words. That is what she said. She is going to vote for a piece of legislation that is probably going to impact everybody, but not in good ways. When we are in this House of Assembly we look at good legislation. That is why we have looked at what we have had –

**MS PERRY:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** A point of order.

The hon. Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS PERRY:** I was referring, Mr. Speaker, to us from a political point of view in that we, as colleagues, may have a divide against each other for the same areas because there would be thirty-eight seats instead of forty. That is what I meant.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have no problem with seeing a reduced number of seats in the House of Assembly, but I think the issue that we have is how this has come forward. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape

La Hune has said this is budgetary. She went on quite lengthy in her conversation around the Budget and how there has to be at least \$500 million in Budget cuts.

Yesterday the Premier confirmed that Newfoundland and Labrador is in a financial crisis and recalled this House. It was done in haste so that it could deal with this one single matter which is Bill 42. It was further announced that the Budget would be delayed.

Last year, and when the mid-year financial update came in, it said that the Province is facing a \$1 billion deficit and had to borrow \$1 billion. You can only borrow and have deficits for so long before you do really have a real problem.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I ask the hon. member to speak to the bill please.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Sure. Instead what we are seeing here today in this House of Assembly is Bill 42, which is presented in a real dictatorial fashion where it asks MHAs to support cutting this House from forty-eight to thirty-eight. Whereas our caucus has made very clear that a better approach, if this is going to be done – because this government has the majority. It brings the legislation in and it can pass whatever rules and laws it likes. It can use its majority. If it wants to, it can. Members like the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune say this can have a negative impact; it can impact her in not good ways. That is what was just said.

**MS PERRY:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

**MR. SPEAKER:** A point of order, the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS PERRY:** As I clarified, the point I was making was, are they worried about political concerns? From a political point of view the only worry we would have, and impact, would be that there will be thirty-eight or us instead of forty-eight of us. In some areas we may have to vie against each other for the same seat.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly must be striking a nerve with the member opposite on all of these points of order. I only have twenty minutes in debate.

I will continue to make my points, though, that we as a party had put forward a range because a range is not dictatorial. It allows the commission to look at the geographical nature of our Province. It also looks at the variance in population. It also looks at differing changes.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Just for the record I will read out what the population census of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune is. It is 7,375, basically half of what the Premier is proposing for an electoral district.

If we look at where we are right now, and the Finance Minister had talked about this, our population density per square kilometre, we are only 1.4. We are more similar to Saskatchewan, which has 1.8. Well, let's put in context that we have 1.4 people per square kilometer based on the census of 2011.

On the South Coast of this Province we only have a population density of 0.8, very few people, a huge geography. On the Northern Peninsula it is the same thing, 1.2, very small.

If we look at the other Legislatures in the country that have less members, they are at 24.7 in population density. If we look at other areas of Newfoundland and Labrador based on census divisions, the Avalon Peninsula fares above that average for Prince Edward Island and it is 28.5 in population. In other areas it ranges between 0.1 in Labrador, all the way up to 4.0 in terms of population.

Newfoundland and Labrador certainly does work with challenges and I think that is important to recognize. I would not want to discredit the work that members in urban areas

do, even though they would be close to the vicinity of access to this building and to other offices.

For the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune to say that her office or an MHA's office in a rural area is the Health Department, is the Justice Department, it is every department, it shows that certainly there is something wrong in the system. It is pointing blame, basically, that those who are doing the work, those civil servants, she is basically saying they are not doing their job. I have more faith in the public –

**MS PERRY:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** On a point of order, the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS PERRY:** Again, I have to clarify. I was referencing the fact that we do not have as many government offices in our rural areas. We have some, but certainly not every department of government is located in every rural region of the Province.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say the member opposite had her twenty minutes; I hope she will give me the courtesy for mine. She could have clearly said that in her twenty minutes.

Getting back to this piece of legislation that has been put before the House, there was little evidence that there has been any research, or very little, on this matter as to when the idea came down. The legislation was not drafted on Friday because it was not available. Then it came with an error, and now we are here. We have been debating this in the House throughout the week.

The unelected Justice Minister noted that presentations – and boxes that we finally received after being requested from the Mahoney Commission were in storage, and they

were not reviewed by the Justice department. It certainly was not twenty boxes.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How many did you get?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** We got a couple of boxes.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Two.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Two boxes. So it is certainly not a thorough process. I believe in the philosophy that if you do not know where you came from, you do not know really where you are going, so you need to look it.

There is no evidence to support the particular number of thirty-eight to show that you can have a fully functioning House of Assembly supported by committees and other related works. Obviously, this was done in haste. That is why we, as the Official Opposition, our caucus, took time to review the legislation and see how it can be improved.

We put forward a couple of reasoned amendments thus far and we will continue to put forward amendments to enhance this legislation, because hastily drafting legislation makes way for errors. I only need to mention Bill 29 and the Abitibi bill expropriation.

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a due process, and this was scheduled to occur in 2016 when there would have been updated census information. It is clear to the public that this is not really about saving \$2 million a year; it is really just desperation.

As I said earlier, I support a reduction in seats in the Legislature. I believe it can be done. I do not believe, though, that an arbitrary number can be dictated is the best approach, as presented by this government. It is certainly not very democratic.

Back to thirty-eight MHAs, and I have been conducting some research on this. Let's look at the history. From 1962 to 1972 there were four

general elections, and the seat count at that time was forty-two members. I go back to the last time the census was done prior to those elections. In 1971 – now I hope people are listening to this. In 1971, with forty-two seats, our population was 522,100. It is very similar to what we have today. Prior to 1962, less than 460,000 people lived in Newfoundland and Labrador, with representation of thirty-six members.

Looking at turning back the clock almost fifty years, this is what this government is looking at doing, turning back the time about fifty years in the Legislature when we had a population much smaller, with a number like thirty-eight. I do not feel that number could be – and as the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune talked about the Leader of the Official Opposition and used a statement.

Well, you can use a statement, and you can use the context of what was said based on the interview, but the Leader of the Official Opposition has said, and has said since March: Personally, that number could be forty. It could function with forty, but it could be more or it could be less. I do feel that number should not be – and that is why this draft legislation can be improved, but this government has a majority and will choose to use it however it wants.

We have seen it before where bills have been passed where people of the Province do not want them, like the monopoly bill, the monopoly bill we passed that limits innovation to energy such as wind and feed-in tariffs and all these types of things. It is a little bit draconian, actually. In the last three years I have seen a lot of poor policy come from this government. As the Member for Conception Bay South said, I believe it was: garbage in, garbage out. We need to see better policy.

The Office of Public Engagement which, when we look at a technology perspective, released a lot of datasets today. They released datasets about population, population projections. Now, that is something that is important. If we are projecting population, we are making decisions based on a quotient of the population and geography.

I took some time as the MHA for the Official Opposition responsible for the Office of Public Engagement, and I downloaded that dataset. The dataset goes to 2035. Now, if anybody is interested in looking at that dataset, they will find it is the most useless piece of information that government has put forward on that Open Government Initiative. It has 368,000 lines on it, 368,000 lines in an excel spreadsheet. It is not in useable format.

This government is clearly not listening to the people when it says it is making things more available. Well, you can make things available, but if it is garbage information out and it is not in a useable format than groups are not going to be able to use it. If you look at the other datasets that were put forward, it is completely put in a way that is not user friendly and it will be irrelevant.

I hope the Minister for the Office of Public Engagement, the Deputy Premier, will certainly listen to my commentary because I look back and I look at this presentation that was put forward back in 2006 about information. This was submitted by the City of Mount Pearl on electoral boundaries –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Yes, submitted by the City of Mount Pearl, put forward by the deputy mayor at the time. I think he has moved up to another deputy position here in the Province right now. It states: It would be more timely and effective if the timing of the review – talking about the electoral boundaries – was to happen eighteen months after a census.

The last census happened in 2011. We got the information a little bit later, so eighteen months after that. That is when this review should take place, not just months before an election. It says: The new information from the census should be as current as reasonably possible and would assist in determining more accurate population in each district – because people do move around and things really do change. Having good information is really important.

One thing I have a big concern about is getting this work done in the timeline. This government says it can do it in 120 days. It says the

commission can do it in 120 days, when everywhere else in the country it has never been done in an election year. It has never been done in 120 days, and every other province has done this.

Other provinces, like Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, have done electoral boundaries. Some of them have faced court challenges. In the case of Nova Scotia, the New Democratic Party did not agree with the commission. They rejected their report and sent it back. There are processes in place where they can say, no, we do not agree. We want it our way. That is what the government says.

I would hope that this government can live up to its word and get this work done in the timeline so that it does not delay the general election, which there is supposed to be a fixed election date. This government put forward the legislation, so let's see if that will happen.

I only hope that they can live up to their words because there are a lot of other promises and a lot of other words that they have said for the Great Northern Peninsula and the other people of the Province that they have not kept. They have been poor fiscal managers and they have been poor leaders of this Province. This year's Budget will clearly show that.

I have a lot of opposition right now to this legislation, as it currently is.

Thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I am certainly delighted to stand in this hon. House to represent the people of the Province and represent the people for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale. I always consider it a privilege and an honour to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is on record that he would do three initiatives or three things to

initiate House of Assembly reform. One of these he said already is the review of the MHA pension plan – to my knowledge, it has been started – two is modernize the procedures to make the House of Assembly proceedings more effective and more efficient; and, of course, the third one, which we are here this evening debating, he would take immediate review and reduction of electoral districts from forty-eight seats to thirty-eight seats. Hence, we have the bill, Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act.

Mr. Speaker, not only will this step be huge savings, these three initiatives will be huge savings, but equally more important is that this reform will ensure that the House of Assembly will be more effective and more efficient in the service of the people of the Province.

Saving \$10 million over four years is not insignificant. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is very significant, especially in this fiscal climate in which we all face, over which we never had any control over. This move shows strong, prudent, bold leadership, that it is not afraid to act when action is required. When tough times come, you cannot hide behind a rock; a leader has to stand up to the plate. Everyone appreciates strong leadership; everyone in this Province expects strong leadership. Anyone can lead when times are good. We still do have a strong economy, Mr. Speaker. We have a robust and a vibrant economy.

This Premier demonstrated already that he is prepared to lead by example – how? Well, he is not going to wait to see which way the winds are going to blow first and then take a stance. We are not prepared to lead from behind. This Premier, this government, is prepared to look internally first, look at our own house, and take care of our own business first; like the hon. the Member for Terra Nova, lead by example, look inward, and then we take some action outward as well.

That is what good leadership is all about, Mr. Speaker, when there are tough times. You assess situations from all angles; you then assume a position. You stick to your guns, especially when it is the right thing to do, it is



the prudent thing to do, and it is the most responsible thing to do.

In my six years – I am going on seven years now, basically, this summer, as an MHA. Every now and then I hear throughout the district and, of course, all around the Province, cut the number of seats they say in the House of Assembly; too many MHAs in there. Well, now that the Premier is taking action because now is not in line with their philosophy, the Opposition is saying no, no, hang on a second now; that may not be the right thing to do.

It was the right thing to do two weeks ago, three weeks ago, a year ago, and two years ago. That is fickle, Mr. Speaker. We cannot have it both ways. We cannot have our cake and eat it too, so we cannot have that both ways. I would submit and ask the question: Why not now? They ask: Why now? I ask: Why not now? What precipitated this move in this first place, Mr. Speaker?

We all know, number one, representation is very important to each person in this Province – no doubt, Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important. Compared to other provinces, we rank very, very well. Some provinces have 16,000, 17,000 average in their districts; in our case, we have an average of 3,200, 5,000, 6,000, 8,000, 9,000, 10,000. In my district I believe it is somewhere around 11,700.

Even after reducing the seats, Mr. Speaker, we still have only 13,000 or 14,000 on average per district, so that is not an overwhelming burden and overwhelming task. Yes, it is added responsibility. We all know that, Mr. Speaker. We all knocked on doors, we all put up our hands to do this job, and I am sure every MHA here is going to be willing to step up to the plate and do the work that is required. I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker.

This still leaves us, as a Province, ranking very well. I would have some grave problems if every MHA is going to represent 100,000 people, but we are still only averaging 13,000 or 14,000 per district. This still leaves us, as a Province, ranking very well compared to the rest of Canada.

All political parties are going to be impacted by this, there is no question, by this reduction of seats. This is not self-serving. How is this self-serving? Ten of us, basically, are going to lose our jobs. It is simple, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to lose my job. It is not easy. Some of us will lose our jobs. They love their job. I love my job. We all love our jobs, Mr. Speaker.

I have no idea how the electoral boundaries commission will carve out the Province into thirty-eight districts. They are independent. They will do their work, so why not now? Why wait? If not now, when is a good time? If you wait until 2016, as they espouse and propose, reduction would not occur until 2019. That makes ten MHAs in here redundant, Mr. Speaker. Imagine, in here for three years, redundant, laying ducks, Mr. Speaker. What influence are we going to have? What are the constituents – how would they look at you, me, or anybody else if we are considered redundant?

This sudden drop in oil prices blindsided everybody. This is not a Newfoundland problem; this is global. Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, Russia, all oil exporting countries, all the experts could not predict this sudden nosedive in the oil prices, causing instability and you name it and speculation all around the world. This is not unique just to Newfoundland and Labrador; this is a global issue.

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

**MR. POLLARD:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In times like these a responsible, prudent government takes bold action. Government leads in times of instability. We are required to make adjustments right now. We are required to take bold steps to sustain a good, strong economic stance. We are accountable to the people of the Province. People in tough times expect and demand strong, smart, prudent management of all the resources.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want my District of Baie Verte – Springdale to be carved up, but I have no control over that. I am sure every MHA feels the same way about their respective districts because they love their districts; they made relationships with the people that they have been

representing the last one year, two years, three years or ten years.

It has to happen for the good of the Province. I am ready to take on more responsibility, should I be fortunate enough to win the PC nomination again and ultimately be the MHA for that new district, which I have to fight for, like everybody else. I am ready to do that.

What is the motive? They say, well, it is an ulterior motive. I submit to them, the motive is just strong, prudent management, strong leadership, fiscally prudent, and just fair representation for the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. KIRBY:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** A point of order, the hon. Member for St. John's North.

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, if this government wanted fiscal prudence, they would cut the size of the Cabinet, not increase the size of the Cabinet. They would get rid of those five parliamentary secretaries that we do not need, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is not point of order.

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier does not appoint the commission or the chair of the boundaries commission. The government does not appoint any commissioners. If the government did, we certainly would be skeptical, Mr. Speaker.

The commissioners will be independent. I take comfort in that, Mr. Speaker. We feel that, again, 120 days is ample time for the job to be done.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile on a point of order.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I just have to point this out to the member opposite. I hope he is clear that the government does actually appoint people to the commission.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

**MR. POLLARD:** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing sinister here going to take place. This is the seventh time a commission has been struck to work on electoral boundaries. In 1973, there were fifty-one seats. In 1983, there were fifty-two. In 1993, there were forty-four. In 1995, there were forty-eight seats. In 2003, there were forty-eight seats. In 2006, there were forty-eight seats.

The precedent is already set, Mr. Speaker. There is a process already laid out in legislation so it is not a sinister process. In order to complete its work, the act gives the commission the power to employ the resources that they need, whatever they require. Any technical expertise, they can have it.

For example, this was the composition of the commission in 2006. The legal counsel to the commission was one, technical support. Then you had an administrative officer. That is two. Then you had a cartographer, number three, to provide mapmaking services. Then you had one from the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency. That is where the extra staff was, Mr. Speaker. Then you had the five members who comprised the commission.

I am confident that 120 days is ample time because that commission will be given all kinds of expertise and resources to do their job well, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing sinister going on here. The act is simply a mechanism for the review and amendment of the electoral boundaries in Newfoundland and Labrador. The act lays out a process to follow. It is quite clear.

The chief justice selects the chairperson and the Speaker appoints four other members. They will be qualified, professional people, Mr. Speaker, like the 2006 commission which was comprised of the hon. John O'Neill, who was chair. The vice-chair was Robert Aylward. Then we had

three commissioners: you had Julie Eveleigh, you had Roger Grimes, and you had Cle Newhook. These were the five people who comprised the commission in 2006, chaired by the hon. John O'Neill, a chief judge.

I have no problem with the number as well, Mr. Speaker. The commission needs some boundaries. The commission needs some information, a framework to do their work. You have to tell them is it thirty-eight seats, is it forty seats, is it forty-two seats, is it thirty seats, or is it twenty seats?

Since 1973, every government gave a commission a number that the commission could use as a template to work with, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing sinister there as well. I have no problem with the number. The precedent is already set with other previous governments and previous legislation.

Mr. Speaker, just to give you an example of some of the things that could take place when it comes to a district and how it could be carved up – I just went out on the highway here. In 1952 in my district, for example, in years gone by, White Bay had a member and Green Bay had a member. In 1957 it was then carved up into White Bay North, it was carved up into White Bay South, and Green Bay. That was three members. Then in 1972 it was renamed Baie Verte – White Bay, and then Green Bay. That was two members.

In 1996 you had another district called Baie Verte only, and then there was another one called Windsor – Springdale. Then in 2007 you had Baie Verte – Springdale. I said that to say that I have no idea which district is going to be carved up. That is an example right there. All we have to do is just have confidence in the independent commission, Mr. Speaker

Before I conclude, I want to ask one question and I will give the answer, Mr. Speaker. How will these amendments change the process from the last commission in 2006? Number one, first under the current act the next commission would be appointed in 2016 and would provide their report by the end of that calendar year. These amendments would require the commission to report in 2015.

Secondly, the commission will be required to divide the Province into thirty-eight one-member districts as opposed to the current forty-eight. Thirdly, once the chief justice has appointed a chairperson, the Speaker will be required to appoint the four remaining members within five days as opposed to as expeditiously as possible under the current act.

Number four, the 2015 commission will be permitted to use the latest available census population figures from Statistics Canada regardless of when they are taken, as opposed to data available as of March 31 as required by the current act. Fifthly, the commission will be required to report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety within 120 days from the appointment of the chairperson as opposed to reporting by the end of the calendar year, as was required by the current Act.

Mr. Speaker, just before I sit down, I heard the hon. member over there saying that it cannot be done because it was never done before. If Thomas A. Edison, or Alexander Graham Bell – or if Neil Armstrong said I cannot land on the moon because it was not done before, he would not have had the vision.

Mr. Speaker, we were leaders. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Humber East.

**MR. FLYNN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back some years ago I had the privilege to serve on a health board. We had made some decisions that drastically affected patients in the system. To be quite honest with you, I was rather concerned about the decisions we made and how it affected the people we were put there to hopefully support to the point where I actually went and saw a friend of mine who looked at me one day said: Stelman, if you were given all of the information at that time that was available, if you had that information at your disposal, you based your decision on the information that was given you, and there was no personal gain in this for you, then you had made the right decision.

Mr. Speaker, as I look around at some of the decisions we are hearing today – and I will touch on them as I go through. Some of the decisions that we are making here today are awfully rushed decisions for the price that democracy costs us in this Province and indeed this country.

If we look at Bill 42 and the implications that it has on the democracy in this Province we have to be concerned about where we are going. I know there were opportunities this week to point out some of the rushed decisions that have been made here in the House and the cost it has been to the Province. I will not touch too much on that. I think what we have to do here is talk about how this represents the Province as a whole and the effects that it can have on the Province.

The key to, I believe, true democracy is that we have a meaningful, thoughtful, well-thought-out, planned debate, and what we are doing here. That cannot be defined with one criterion. That cannot be defined in 120 days and thirty-eight seats, because we have to take into consideration other aspects about living in this Province.

Now, listen, I know we are smart people. I know we are brighter than any other Province that we have. To think we can actually do this in 120 days, we probably think we are miracle workers here. I can accept the fact that we are really smart, on the ball, but I really think we are pushing the opportunity here to do something right.

We have basically one mandate in this piece of legislation, and that is to cut the number of MHAs in this House. Do you know what? I have no problem with that. I listened to the leaders of three parties, and they have no problem with that. It is just the way this is being done.

When I hear ministers come forward and say we have put a lot of consideration into this, I really have to question what some of those people really think a lot of consideration is. Considering it was only a few months ago that the Premier secured his own nomination for the district in which he ran.

Yesterday, I heard my colleague from Labrador get up and speak in the House. I was really

impressed with what he had to say. Except the first part of that speech I had no clue what he said, because he spoke in his native tongue. I think it is important to remember that, and I will come back to that later.

I also heard yesterday from members on the opposite side of the House say how they loved their visit to Labrador. They really understand Labrador, and they understand the people who live there. Well, Mr. Speaker, I lived in Labrador for over fifty years, and to be quite honest with you, I do have a strong connection with the people, with the circumstances in Labrador. I served many volunteer hours, taking time away from my family to get out and do volunteer work in Labrador and throughout the Province. It is always a struggle to make them understand, to make the rest of the Province understand unique circumstances – yes, unique circumstances – that are in Labrador.

When I heard some of the ministers say, oh yes, we have been in Labrador, I wonder what announcement they were making or if it was indeed just a fishing trip. We did not mind taking your money back then either. Maybe you came down berry picking, I do not know. In any case, I am rather disturbed by two colleagues of mine from Labrador West and Lake Melville who are actually not speaking out about this –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the member to speak to the principle of the bill.

**MR. FLYNN:** I am speaking about the members being, I guess, muzzled and not being able to speak –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The member has to speak to the principle of the bill.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

**MR. FLYNN:** In Bill 42, right now it is saying three seats for Labrador, or fewer, and I am concerned with that from a number of perspectives, given all the resources that are coming out of Labrador and what the Province has gained from Labrador and the need to have a

voice to be heard here in this House. I think every constituent from any district across this Province has a right to have a timely meeting with their representative in this House.

In many cases, if you have to travel on ski-doo or if you have to travel by helicopter, that is not timely fashion to have meetings with your constituents. When I look at areas like Black Tickle and Nain, how many of you can actually say you have the same challenges in your district?

A few days ago when my colleague from Torngat Mountains spoke in his language, I had no idea what he had to say. That points I think to the differences we have in this Province, that we do have in this Province a diverse cultural background, and we have lots of transportation issues. When we make this decision on how many seats should make up the Legislature in this Province, all of that has to be taken into consideration.

As I travel around my district of Humber East, I run into, many times, people from the Mi'kmaq group. There are 25,000 registered; there are 11,000 approved. We really have not given them the opportunity to be able to have input into this.

The legislation calls for, in Bill 42, to have two meetings in the Province. One of them has to be in Labrador and the other somewhere on the Island. Is that going to be St. John's? I do not know. I have nothing against the people in St. John's, but what I will tell you, people in Humber East are going to want to make their voice heard to the commission as well. I think by putting time frames on the commission to do its work, none of those considerations will be put in place. I think that is dangerous to democracy. It is certainly dangerous if you want true reform in this House, if we start cutting the numbers down.

If we look at the pure numbers across this Province, right now the Avalon Peninsula, as it looks, will get between eighteen and nineteen members. The Avalon Peninsula will have 50 per cent of the elected officials sitting in the House of Assembly. I believe that is a pretty lopsided representation in this Province.

I know there are alienations on the West Coast, particularly in Humber East. I just went through an election there. I heard it at the door, and I am not putting one area of the Province against the other. My point here, Mr. Speaker, is just to point out to this House what is being said on the ground in the districts and there are grave concerns what this legislation may do if it is adopted as it presently reads. We have a responsibility to all of the people in this Province to ensure that we have balanced representation and under this proposed legislation there is, as far as I am concerned, no balance, and I think that is a very dangerous threat to democracy.

One of the ministers said yesterday that we had to look at the boundaries in each of the cities because there were some streets you go on, one side of the street was in one district, the next side of the street was in the next district. So we are going to throw that to the commission and expect them to hear from the people of this Province, have all of this ironed out and unless they are miracle workers, they are really going to run out of time.

In addition to that, we want this done right, yet we are working with numbers that are basically more than four years old. Can we really call this due diligence if we are working with numbers that are that old? I remember going on streets in Humber East when I ran there, when I went to the door with the list and knocked on the door. Is Mr. So and So there? Oh, no, he died four years ago. That is how outdated the numbers we have are. I think that is pretty demoralizing when you do that. How do you explain to the family, I am sorry, this is information that was given to me by the government of this Province and it is that outdated?

Someone said geography does not affect the population. A few members here would agree with that, but as we talk to the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, who, if the road is open, will take at least seven hours in good weather to travel from one end of the district to the other. I am fortunate in Humber East that I can do that within a half an hour, but all of the members are not that fortunate and they sit on both sides of the House.

We do have to take that into consideration because I believe it is my responsibility, as an MHA, to see that the voices of the people are heard back here in this House. I think it is sad when we kind of say to these people no, you are not as important any more. I think that will come back to kick us in the behind as we move forward with this.

We have said that we have listened to the people. It was interesting because CBC had done a poll on what we are discussing here tonight. Pretty much that poll was split 50-50, down the middle, on the need for four seats in Labrador as an example. I consider that remarkable growth. I can remember being President of Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador where they left off Labrador so often that they would put a quarter in the jar every time they did it, and my colleague across the way can contest to that and I guarantee you I never ever let them forget it.

If we take politics out of what we are discussing here tonight and use this as an opportunity to really make changes to democracy in the Province that is where the real gain will be to. We should not be afraid to let the commission once more take all of this into consideration rather than rush this through the House.

We have to study the impacts of the decision that we are making here tonight because, if we are wrong, it will have a tremendous negative impact on the Province. Maybe we are right; maybe you are right in saying that it can be done. I am not arguing that, but I think we have to have the full information; we have to give the people who are tasked with this job the opportunity to be able to take that and go with it.

I will not go into the reason why we should not rush Bill 42, because we have seen what some of these mistakes have made in the past and they have been referenced here tonight, plus the fact the Speaker will ask me to get back to the bill we are discussing.

I think that it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we really give the opportunity to have the right work done for the right reason. The right reason is not my seat. It is not his seat, or his seat. The right reason is for the people of the Province. It is for the constituents that I represent in Humber

East. I want to make sure that their voice is heard here in the House, and I think we have to take due diligence in making sure that it is done.

The public hearings, again, if I might refer back to it, we are basically saying to five people: here, you go out, have two meetings, you can have more, but we are only still going to give you 120 days. Does that mean the voice of someone in St. Anthony is not the value of someone in Labrador, or the voice of Humber East is not as valuable as a voice from someone in St. John's? Unfortunately, this is where I believe this debate will end up going as we move through the process.

When we talk of reform here in the House, is really cutting the numbers that are actually sitting in this House reform, or is it just standing up and saying, for political reasons, this is what we have to do to save money because we really have to cover up some of the mistakes in the past? I really think that we are talking about reform here. We are really trying to masquerade mistakes that have happened in this House in the past, but I believe that due diligence has to be played, and should be played; take away the partisan politics of this and make sure that due diligence and the voices of the people across the Province are heard because this has insurmountable effects that we will not be able to correct, if we are wrong with this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Just before I recognize the next member, I would just like to pause for minute and ask people to reflect on their twenty-fifth birthday. We have with us tonight a Page who is celebrating her twenty-fifth birthday here in the House of Assembly with us all night. We want to say happy birthday to Fatimah.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** One of my colleagues just said they wanted to sing *Happy Birthday*. If that

is the case, I give leave on my time if the House wanted to do that; otherwise, I will continue to speak. I guess that is off the books, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Bill 42. We have all heard from our constituents and from people around the Province, I am sure, on this bill. I would say probably 90 per cent of the people in the Province would agree with reducing the number of electoral districts in this Province, Mr. Speaker, especially in today's climate where government is looking at fiscal restraint. There are a number of concerns that are raised.

I have gotten numbers of people over the past week since government announced their intention to look at this – and it was before that trial balloon word, if you want to call it that, was leaked to the media. Government was considering this move and the media reported on it. Immediately I think the people of the Province looked at it with some optimism that the number of electoral districts would be reduced and the cost savings as a result of that.

As people started to digest what this meant and started to look at what it meant, there are two avenues that people are looking at in regard to what this actually means. One of them is the actual reduction in the number of electoral districts and the fact that people are happy with that. The other is the reason behind the timing. I heard one media report saying it was the same as changing the rules to football the night before the Grey Cup. Mr. Speaker, that is truly a factor.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The third quarter.

**MR. OSBORNE:** The third quarter was it, the media report said. It was something to that effect.

That is essentially what is happening. The rules for the next election, if you want to call it that, are being changed because the number of boundaries, the number of districts is being changed. Each political party was preparing for game day based on the rules that were in place, including the government party, because they had nominations in place as well.

There is a great deal of wonderment, curiosity, questions, and concern about what is actually happening here. Based on some of the comments I have received, Mr. Speaker, they wonder if this move is more political than a cost-saving measure. I have had a number of people say that. A number of people have said to me that, yes, while they agree with the reduction in the number of electoral districts, are there politics behind this? Is the motivation for this move purely political?

People want the reduction. They want an election this year. People have been very clean on that. With or without the work of the commission, they do not want the fact that government is now going to put a commission in place to look at and study the number of electoral districts and make changes to be a reason to push the election out.

One person who signed one of the petitions we put forward, Mr. Speaker, said to me that government knew if they called an election today they would not win the election. They knew if they stretched it out to the very last day before they could call it, they would not win the election. If they called it any time in between, there is no way government would win that election. The polling has been consistent over the past couple of years to say that.

Part of the reason Bill 42 is being debated in the House today, I would contend – I would agree with the person who spoke to me about that – it is because government had to do something to better their chances at the election. I believe that is part of the reason for this. It is not simply a cost-saving measure. If it was, Mr. Speaker, without delay, the Premier would cut the number of Cabinet. He does not have to send that to an electoral boundaries commission. He would cut the number of people sitting in Cabinet. That can be done today.

Mr. Speaker, they do not want to enforce or cause conflict in their own party at this particular point. They do not want to cut the number of Cabinet at this particular time. The Premier even said in the media he will reduce the number of Cabinet when the number of seats is reduced. He has since made a statement in the House that all things are on the table. He is

going to look at that along with other Budget items.

If the reason for cutting the number of electoral districts by eight was a cost-saving measure, as was said by the Premier, he would look as well at cutting the number of Cabinet positions.

There are five parliamentary assistants. If the reason we are debating this bill, if part of that motivation was not political, Mr. Speaker – I submit that if the Premier was absolutely sincere about his motivations and the reasons he has put forward for the motivations for Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act, and cutting the number of seats by eight, he would cut the number of parliamentary assistants by eight as well – or sorry, the number of parliamentary assistants, there are five of them; he would cut those five positions.

Other provinces have parliamentary assistants –

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

I would ask the member to make his comments relevant to the bill.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will do that.

We are looking at cutting the number of electoral districts, Mr. Speaker. As part of that debate there has been a number of things talked about. As part of that debate we have talked about the parliamentary assistants. If we look at other provinces –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the member to make his comments related to the principle of the bill.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at cutting the number of electoral districts by eight in this Province. That is what has been put on the table.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** By ten.

**MR. OSBORNE:** By ten. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, by ten from forty-eight to thirty-eight seats.

Mr. Speaker, part of the petition that we put forward, respecting this particular bill that we are debating now, is the fact that people are concerned as to whether or not the commission will have enough time to sufficiently consult with people around the Province. They are concerned as to whether or not the commission will have enough time to properly evaluate the geographical implications of reducing the number of seats by ten, whether or not they will have enough time to properly review the population implications and the population shift.

Mr. Speaker, the census is out next year or going to be done next year. That was part of the reason for the timing of the electoral boundaries commission for 2016. Will they have the proper information to base their population counts on?

There has been a great deal of discussion about Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and the desire of the members on this side of the House of Assembly and the members of the Liberal Party to protect the number of seats in Labrador, four seats.

There is a very valid reason we are looking at doing that. The geography of Labrador is better than two times the size of the geography of the Island. Currently, there are forty-four seats on the Island and four in Labrador.

So, Mr. Speaker, that part of our Province, with such a huge geography, some of the seats there only have 3,000 or 4,000 people. The reason for that is the complications and the challenges of travelling throughout those districts. If we were to go simply based on the formula that the Premier was suggesting of 13,000 people per seat in this Province, you would look at a reduction of at least one seat in Labrador, probably two, probably one-and-a-half – you put part of one of the Labrador seats with one of the Island seats.

If you did that, Mr. Speaker, the challenges in the MHA for those districts in Labrador to properly service those districts, to be able to travel those districts reasonably and have people from those districts visit their MHA's office reasonably, is seriously impeded. So one of the amendments that we are putting forward on this particular bill is to protect Labrador as having four seats. We would like to see Labrador seats protected for that reason.



One of the other amendments that we are looking at on this particular bill is to put a range of between thirty-eight and forty-two seats, so that we as legislators are not dictating to the boundaries commission the number of seats that should be in place while they do their work so that they can look at different seats and different areas, different regions of the Province, the challenges in different regions; if they were able to properly carry out their consultations, their work, look at different regions of the Province, and say we cannot do it with thirty-eight seats reasonably, we need thirty-nine or we need forty, or maybe we need the full forty-two.

We are not suggesting that it has to be thirty-eight seats. We are not holding the boundary commission to thirty-eight seats. We are giving them some flexibility to be able to say yes, we agree. We will have a reduction in a number of electoral districts in the Province. We agree with that, but give the commission enough latitude that after their consultations, and after looking at the geographical implications and the population implications, and after looking at the demographics – because it is not just population count, the demographics of some of those populations, Mr. Speaker.

If you have a district where the population is aging – and some districts in the Province are. Some districts in the Province, the population is aging, and you have schools where there is only three or four people in a classroom, three or four children. That means that if you based their population at 13,000, the number of people eligible to vote in that district could be significantly different than a district where the population is considerably younger.

It is not just geographical implications, it is not just population implications, but perhaps the demographical implications as well. For a boundary commission to properly carry out their work and to look at all aspects of what would affect the ability of a Member of the House of Assembly to carry out his or her duties and to look at the implications of how the population in a particular district might be best represented, we want to give that commission a range. A range of somewhere between thirty-eight and forty-two seats, so that they are not handcuffed in carrying out their duties to just simply thirty-eight seats, and the people of the Province are

best served. They are best served by a boundary commission that can look at and properly evaluate each and every district and determine whether thirty-eight is the best number or forty-two members is the best number, or somewhere in between.

Another amendment that we are looking at putting forward to this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we want to ensure that the election actually takes place this year. Carrying out the work of the commission should not be an excuse for government to delay the election; it should not be an excuse for government to be able to push the election into 2016.

Some of the people who I have had sign the petition have said to me that we have had three-and-a-half Premiers since the last election. They say three-and-a-half because we have had Premier Dunderdale, we had Premier Marshall, we have had the almost-Premier Coleman, and now Premier Davis. So we have had three-and-a-half Premiers since the last election.

Mr. Speaker, those individuals who have raised that particular concern with me – because I have spoken to many people about this; people are paying attention to what is happening here on this particular piece of legislation and what government are trying to do. People are paying attention. They have said we will give Premier Davis – sorry, I realize I am not supposed to mention the name of the sitting member. We will give the current Premier the latitude to say that he can carry on until September of 2015, but many people do not feel that he has the mandate to do that. He was not elected by the people, only by the members of the PC Party.

**MS PERRY:** Roger Grimes (inaudible).

**MR. OSBORNE:** The legislation, Mr. Speaker – and yes, I heard the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune shout out Roger Grimes. That is exactly the reason that party brought legislation in so that you could not have – not only for fixed elections, but you could not have a particular Premier who took over after an election – and it is all part of this legislation. It is all part of the legislation, but you could not have a Premier take over – it is part of the Elections Act and, in fact, a part of Bill 42. It is all a part of that, but

you could not have a Premier take over and hold office for two years or even a year-and-a-half. It is supposed to be done within a year.

If the election is pushed out beyond 2016, then not only did they not have the mandate from the people to govern, only from the party, and while the legislation allows them to continue to govern while they are preparing for an election, they do not have the mandate to go beyond September of 2015. So, that is an important part of this. The amendment that we are putting forward is to ensure that with or without the work of the boundary commission being complete, with or without that work, the election will be held in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, that is a reasonable amendment, it is a just amendment, and it is an amendment that the vast majority of people in this Province – just as many as would support a reduction in the number of electoral districts, would support ensuring that the election take place in 2015.

We need those assurances; the people of this Province need those assurances. If we are truly here to serve the best interests of the people of this Province, we would make sure that the election is not pushed out because of the work of a rushed – and while the Premier is saying that the work of the boundary commission can be done in 120 days, we are not convinced that they can do justice to the work that they need to do, looking at the geographical implications, the population and demographic implications to determining the new boundaries. One hundred and twenty days is considerably less than it took similar commissions in every other province to complete their work. It is considerably less than previous commissions in this Province did to complete their work.

In fact, in 2006, Mr. Speaker, there was not a reduction in the number of electoral districts in this Province, but because of population shifts there was a change in some of the boundaries. They took considerably longer. Without reducing the number of electoral districts, they took considerably longer to simply change the boundaries because of population shift than we are allowing with the 120 days here.

Now, the Premier is telling us be assured, they will get the work done. We are not convinced,

but we are giving the benefit of the doubt and saying if you believe you can carry out this work in 120 days, so be it, carry out the job in 120 days. If it is not done in 120 days, you do not have the ability to push the election out to 2016. We will put the work of the commission on hold, continue their work after the election, and carry on with the election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista South.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege to rise in this House to speak to Bill 42, a very important bill. I have listened attentively to all of the speakers previously. I must say, our Premier has been on record in relation to supporting reform in the House of Assembly, and this government, everyone on this side of the House, are in support as well. The Opposition and the Third Party actually spoke in public and is on record in relation to supporting this particular piece of legislation.

Our Premier, a great leader, has committed to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly from the current number of forty-eight. He has asked that this process start immediately, Mr. Speaker, with a goal to complete work in advance before the next general election in 2015.

I have talked to a number of people in the District of Bonavista and listened to what they had to say about the reduction of seats in the House of Assembly. I had some discussions about what is happening in the global economy as well, Mr. Speaker, and what we are faced with as a government as we speak on this important bill tonight. The people I had discussions with actually approve and agree with a reduction in the House of Assembly and we, as a government, have a responsibility to lead by example.

This government, people on this side of the House, all of the MHAs, my colleagues, have

made a decision that we will lead by example. There are many difficult challenges we will have to face as a government as we go through the global economic challenges that we face today. We will definitely reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier and our government do not appoint the boundaries commission. By law, a Chair is a judge named by the Chief Justice of Newfoundland and Labrador, and four other members of the commission are picked by the Speaker of the House of Assembly. To me, this is a process where government officials are not making the final decisions. We have an independent body, a group of independent people who will make the decisions on the final boundary changes to the electoral process in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Bill 42 is most likely one of the most important bills that we are faced with in relation to changes in this House of Assembly. Every member on each side of the House of Assembly are speaking to this bill with good, strong points of views, Mr. Speaker, views of concern, views that will affect each and every member's district in the House of Assembly. We are all concerned. We are all faced with those challenges, and we, as a government, will make the decisions. We are responsible. We will make the decisions in the best interests of the people who elected us to the House of Assembly.

I remember a time back in 1997, I was a councillor, and we had to make tough decisions, similar to what we are doing here today, based on some fiscal realities we faced as a council. From time to time as a family we have to make difficult decisions, similar to what we are doing here tonight. The debate that is taking place in this House of Assembly is very prudent, very responsible.

We, as a government, are not rushing this process in the House of Assembly here tonight. I have heard on a number of occasions from members opposite that this process is being rushed. This process is not being rushed, Mr. Speaker. We are allowing each speaker to speak for twenty minutes at a maximum. Some are speaking less than twenty minutes, but everybody in the House of Assembly here

tonight, each member has a right to stand on their feet and have discussion around this important bill, Bill 42 that affects each and every district, each and every boundary in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Any time there is an independent review like this it shows leadership. It shows leadership from a governing party that we agree with a system of democracy, Mr. Speaker, because it is democracy when you allow a review like this to happen. I am so delighted to be able to be part of this great government that can stand on its feet and support such an activity in the House of Assembly here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have heard some of my colleagues and some members talk about technology change. We talk about the time that would be allowed for this event to happen and decision makings of the independent review. Time is always a factor, but as a government going into an election – and our members on this side are affected the same as members on the opposite side with a boundary change. No one knows what the outcome will be, Mr. Speaker.

The independent process, the review, will take place. As I said earlier, no one knows the outcome. It is a process that is very democratic because I have heard some comments about democracy and stifling democracy. That is not what anyone in this House of Assembly is doing, Mr. Speaker. We need to have discussions around that particular issue. It is important that we listen to what people are saying in our districts.

I am sure each and every member on each side of the House had major discussions around this issue with constituents in their districts. I know I have had a number of discussions, and I can safely say, by far, the majority of people who I had discussions with in my district, the District of Bonavista South, agree with a reduction in the number of seats in the House of Assembly – they agree.

They agree that this move is being fiscally responsible, something that we should do at this point in time in our history, not only based on finances but based on population, based on what is happening in other provinces around Canada. Similar, in some cases, to population decline

and, in some cases, because of technology change and so forth, it makes a lot of sense to do House of Assembly reform, House of Assembly changes, that will be prudent and fiscally responsible.

I would like to say there is nobody flip-flopping on this side of the House.

**MR. KENT:** Not today.

**MR. LITTLE:** Not today, as the Member for Mount Pearl North just said.

Anyway, we, as a government, will continue to listen to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Our Premier definitely showed strong leadership in making a bold move like this, Mr. Speaker. We, on this side of the House, are united. We support our leader, our Premier, we support our Cabinet, and we support the decisions that are made to bring about changes to the House of Assembly, to bring about a reduction in the number of the House of Assembly.

This move shows a long, hard, thought-out process, and strong leadership and action. We mean action. This is why Bill 42, we came back to this House to present Bill 42, to have discussion on Bill 42, and definitely have Bill 42 in place prior to the next general election.

We have nothing to hide, we listen to the people, and we are realistic, we are very responsible, and we know what is happening. No one could predict what happened in the world markets. No one could predict what happened to the lower oil prices. No one can predict what is going to happen in the future, really. We, based on what we are faced with at this particular time, had no other choice.

Now, some people look at this and say \$10 million savings, some members will look at it, but every dollar counts, every dollar from \$1,000 to \$10,000 to \$100,000 to \$1 million, and cost is part of what is going to be the outcome of seat reduction in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. Definitely we, as a government, will make sure the process is very, very transparent, very, very open, and very, very committed to making sure the final outcome occurs in the timeline that is set.

At this particular time, I would like to close by saying that I appreciate all of the comments made on each side of the House. Each and every comment is important, it is the freedom of speech, and it shows that democracy is taking place in the House of Assembly.

With that, thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was just thinking, the last time I was in this Chamber at 11:00 in the evening it was during the Newfoundland Hydro debate back in the 1990s.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** No, it certainly was not.

I am going to focus first of all on the timelines, Mr. Speaker, the 120 days. It is like when we were all students and if you had a paper due and the paper was due on a Wednesday, we would always wait until Wednesday night to get it done, but we would get it done.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** Maybe not the Member for Humber West, but myself, yes.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker. I have confidence that the report will be delivered in 120 days, but I caution in that. Will the report be rushed? I have rushed a lot of reports and lots of times when you rush a report, you do not get the best paper, the best grade. We have to be very cautious that we do not rush this; it is too important. If you look at other jurisdictions in the country that have completed reviews in recent history, the shortest review in the country from beginning to end was 380 days. The longest review was 1,126 days. That is the timeline from the beginning of the review until election day.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at our fixed election legislation here in Newfoundland and Labrador, an election is supposed to be called September 25 or September 26, 2015. If you back that up from today, we have 246 days – 246 days. The closest to that was Nova Scotia who completed a report and went to an election with 380 days – one year, Mr. Speaker, a lot more than the 120 days that we are allowing for this report to be completed.

That is one of the concerns and that is one of the amendments that we, as the Official Opposition, have put forward to Bill 42. It is an amendment hopefully we will get an opportunity in the coming hours or the coming days to debate here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I will move from the timeline for a moment and just go to parliamentary reform, which the members opposite have referred to, and I think here on this side of the House we have often referred to parliamentary reform and the need for parliamentary reform in the Province, and maybe even the country. Parliamentary reform is a lot more than cutting the number of seats. Actually, parliamentary reform may require this many seats or a different number of seats. So we may be putting the horse before the cart, or the horse may get out of the barn. Sometimes once the horse gets out of the barn, it is hard to get it back.

So if we go to a committee system and realize, wow, we have not got the numbers to have an effective committee system, that is something that we have to bear in mind, that we do not get ahead of ourselves. I understand the savings and I understand savings are very important, and it has been referred to a lot by members opposite over the last two or three days of debate about the savings. Yes, there will be savings.

Mr. Speaker, let us bear in mind, this government has the ability to bring in savings today. We do not need Bill 42 to start savings. No other Atlantic province has parliamentary secretaries; we have five. That could be resolved tonight. We need to bring our Cabinet back that reflects our Legislature and the tough times. These are decisions that do not have to take 120 days or even 246 days.

These are moves that the Premier could make tomorrow morning. Members opposite talk about the bold moves the Premier is making. Well, let's take some of these bold moves and get it done, and get it done now. As the previous speaker said, every dollar does count, and nobody on this side of the House would argue that every dollar does not count.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that Bill 42 does, it is going to rush a decision. Back to the timelines, no other jurisdiction has come even close to completing this type of reform in the timeframe that we are being given, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day we too, here, have to realize that these changes need to be made, but is this the time or do we have the time to properly make the changes?

We have made mistakes in this Province, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to rushed decisions and decisions without due diligence.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Really?

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes. Just back in September, Mr. Speaker, there was a by-election here in the Province. The by-election was delayed and delayed and delayed, and due diligence was not done. I believe the first day this House came back in this fall sitting the first piece of legislation that had to be passed that afternoon, job one, was to fix a typo because something did not get done.

Mr. Speaker, I know exactly because it was my district that was affected by this typo. It did not get gazetted. We could have lost the by-election on that if the parties, the Opposition, would not have gone along that day. We would have lost that by-election. It would have just been null and void and we would have had to start over again with the cost already incurred. The cost would have been incurred. That is why when we sit here or stand here tonight and debate Bill 42 –

**MR. LANE:** They did not want to go through that again.

**MR. CROCKER:** I say thank you to the Member for Mount Pearl South.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be cautious – due diligence. Yes, is \$2.5 million or \$10 million over a four-year period important? It sure is, but once that horse is out of the barn can we get it back in?

Mr. Speaker, there were other rushed decisions in the Province; the Abitibi mill, Bill 29 –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the member to confine his comments to the principle of the bill.

The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde to continue.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will get back on track. Mr. Speaker, our second amendment as the Official Opposition is the amendment surrounding range and the fact that we are asking this commission to go out and do a job. In Bill 42, it is prescribing that the number is thirty-eight. Why thirty-eight? I think listening to the Minister of Finance it is a workable number; 13,500, 13,800, 13,600, whatever the division is.

When you ask five independent people in an independent commission, why can't we have them make an independent decision of how many seats this Province requires? Why do we need to say thirty-eight? Give them a range. I remember, Mr. Speaker, back in 1993 when Premier Wells sent out the commission at that time, the Mahoney commission, back in the early to mid-1990s. It went out and it came back. Yes, we had a range of fifty-two to forty-four.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What happened when it came back?

**MR. CROCKER:** Exactly. What happened when it came back? I thank the member for bringing that up. What happened when it came back?

What happened when it came back was they realized that this is not going to work because square hole, round peg; forty-eight. Mr. Speaker, back at that time it went back out and we did it again. If you were to ask the people

today in Harbour Grace, or the people of Upper Island Cove, or the people of St. Mary's, or Spaniard's Bay were they beneficiaries of those reductions. There were reductions.

We lost the District of Harbour Grace. The District of Harbour Grace was removed. Similar to what is going to happen with Bill 42, there will be districts that are going to just disappear. Bonavista South disappeared, Mr. Speaker. St. Mary's disappeared.

Mr. Speaker, there are challenges that are brought into this system. I am sorry if I am boring somebody.

**MR. KIRBY:** That is okay.

**MR. CROCKER:** You are okay, Dale?

Mr. Speaker, we just came through a period of review with the federal electoral boundaries commission. There were some interesting things. I actually took some time. I was involved a little bit in the federal boundaries commission, involved in a presentation.

Some of the things the federal commission looks at in their guidelines as they go into boundary redistribution, Mr. Speaker; not only do they look at the parity of voter, which is very important, but there has to be some historical and manageable geographic issues. Transportation links are considered, access to government services and commercial and social recreation amenities, existing municipal boundaries, and the boundaries of regional planning and economic development.

In a rush decision, Mr. Speaker, are we looking at what is happening in the future when it comes to population trends and population growth? I believe the Member for Mount Pearl North made a presentation to the electoral boundaries commission back in 2006. I think I have the direct quote here. What the member did say at that time was we should be doing these reviews eighteen months post-census. We are doing this review twelve months before a census report is released. We are going to see changes again in that census of 2015 or 2016.

Another concern, Mr. Speaker, is that if you look back through the previous commissions, the

guidelines in Bill 42 allow for two hearings: one hearing in Labrador and one hearing on the Island. If you live in the District of St. George's – Stephenville East, or the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, or even the Member for Torngat Mountains' district, how accessible are those public hearings going to be?

There has been reference made throughout the week of the use of technology. Mr. Speaker, the use of technology is a wonderful thing. I live one hour and ten minutes from the city. When I go home I have no worries about anybody bothering me on the cellphone because it does not work. We still have challenges that close to the city. Imagine the challenges and the boundaries that people from other parts of the Province will have when they want to have their input on Bill 42.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said in the last two or three days with regard to the Official Opposition's other amendment, the amendment of protecting the four seats in Labrador. The federal electoral boundaries commission said: the continuance of the separate electoral district of Labrador; the population is greatly below the electoral quota, but it received unanimous support to continue with the seat in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, in our caucus we have two members from Labrador who sit around the table every day. Let me assure you they espouse support and they are committed to their part of our great Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CROCKER:** We should protect that, Mr. Speaker, as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, there is another part of Bill 42 that concerns me somewhat. Kudos to the Government House Leader and the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

**MR. LANE:** Justice.

**MR. CROCKER:** Justice – actually, to the Member for Mount Pearl South, that is where I am going. It is his role as the Chamber Justice Minister.

In Bill 42, or the Electoral Boundaries Act, "The commission shall be responsible to the minister." Ironically, Mr. Speaker, the minister is not responsible to this House. All forty-eight of us in here put our names on a ballot. Some of us recently, some of us quite some time ago, but we have all done it. We have all knocked on the doors. I can assure you, as I said in my maiden speech yesterday, I am confident that every single member of this House is here for the right reason.

Mr. Speaker, we have knocked on the doors. We have asked for people's support, and we are here to ask questions. The minister who is responsible for this act, for this legislation, is not here to answer the questions on Bill 42. In a democracy, is that correct?

Mr. Speaker, we have seen that before. Every time we have seen that before in the parliamentary system we are in, Mr. Speaker, that minister ran at the first opportunity. The minister responsible for Bill 42 has had ample opportunity to have a seat in this place.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Relevance.

**MR. CROCKER:** It is relevant to the simple fact that the Minister of Justice is responsible for Bill 42. So there is the relevance.

Mr. Speaker, I have enough notes here to go on all night.

Mr. Speaker, to summarize my three points, number one, I am not confident we can do this in 120 days, and if we make the wrong decision it is going to be a long time before we get the opportunity to fix it. I have heard comments from the other side that practically tie the number of seats to the price of a barrel of oil. Is the next Premier going to bring in a bill – we have Bill 42 here right now, Mr. Speaker, but we have a ten-year period of electoral boundary review, and we have changed that. So, does the next Premier change it again?

There was a reason we picked the number ten. As we go forward, it just cannot be at the whim of a Premier. The next Premier wants to increase it if the price of oil goes up or if the price of oil continues to go down. What is the right number? I think our commission should be

given a range to come back to the powers that be, to the Minister of Justice, and say listen, this is the number and here is the reason why – round hole, square peg.

**MS DEMPSTER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** No, I say to the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, round hole, square peg is not difficult at all; chip a bit off.

Transportation in rural areas – actually, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing up a point. I will go back to my own district and look at the services that are provided by my constituency office, and I am new, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting because people who live in local service districts and unserviced areas rely on the constituency office for a lot of their services. It surprises me, Mr. Speaker, because I am new to it and I am really surprised at some of the services we have been asked to provide. There are people in my district who have to drive two hours to get to my constituency office, and I assure you there are people who have a lot farther to go.

Mr. Speaker, I am assuming or guessing that I will get an opportunity to speak to this legislation again and I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

**MR. CORNECT:** Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Ce soir ça me fait un grand plaisir de me présenter dans cette Chambre d'assemblée et de participer dans le débat pour amender les circonscriptions électorales dans la province de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador.

Monsieur le Président, moi aussi je suis très passionné comme député d'avoir le privilège de prendre part dans ce débat. C'est vraiment un honneur, Monsieur le Président.

Mr. Speaker, like the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains, I too represent a district that is very

rich in culture. The French, the Acadians, the Irish, the Scottish, the Mi'kmaq, the American influence have all woven the wonderful, warm, and hospitable fabric that the District of Port au Port and our Province has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the uniqueness, the people, the coastlines, the natural beauty, our dance, song, music, and storytelling tells a story of a people who are strong and resilient and proud to be called Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The whole Province, like Port au Port, is steeped in a unique culture and a very intriguing history.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am honoured to be standing in my place representing the great people of the great and cultural District of Port au Port in this debate, Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act.

As legislators, parliamentarians, it is our task and our responsibility to make laws in our Province. The amendment to this bill is just that: we are making a law in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are making our Parliament, our House of Assembly, efficient and effective. It is amending a law, a bill that will make our House, like I said, more efficient and effective.

What we are debating this week, Mr. Speaker, is to review and amend the Electoral Boundaries Act to reduce the number of seats in our Legislature. There are currently forty-eight parliamentarians who represent forty-eight boundaries carved out in our Province. We were, and we are, elected by every person nineteen years of age or older, or the legal age to vote.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Eighteen.

**MR. CORNECT:** Eighteen.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Nineteen is a majority.

**MR. CORNECT:** You had your chance to speak, I tell the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, now give me my chance to speak. As he told the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, give me that respect.



**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the hon. the minister to speak to the Chair.

**MR. CORNETT:** Donne-moi le respect.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. minister to speak to the Chair, please.

**MR. CORNETT:** Mr. Speaker, we were elected, and are elected, by the people of the Province of those districts to represent them in this hon. House, the people's House. What a privilege, what an honour it is to stand here talking, speaking, acting, and making laws on behalf of the people of the Province who elected us.

Mr. Speaker, as I go about my district, how many times have I had the comments mentioned to me: The House is too big; get rid of MHAs. Those are some of the comments I hear. We need to reform our House, they tell us.

My comment to them would be: Well, the act says that in Newfoundland and Labrador there is a Newfoundland and Labrador Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission appointed every ten years to look at exactly that. According to the current act, the commission is due to be appointed next year in 2016 to do this work.

Mr. Speaker, when our Premier travelled throughout the Province during the summer, during the leadership campaign, he made it a part of his platform that our Legislature needed electoral and parliamentary reform. That is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. This is the first step of reform: to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the commission was to be appointed in 2016 and whatever decisions made from that review would come into effect at the general election of 2019. What our Premier and our government is saying is let us amend Bill 42. Let us amend it now, and which we are debating this week. When that is done, when it is amended and passed unanimously, I hope, the process starts. When the election is held in the

fall of 2015, there will be reduced seats in our Legislature.

After this, the Chief Justice of Newfoundland and Labrador will appoint a Chairperson for the commission. So once the process is done, we have amended the legislation, the Chief Justice of the Province will appoint a Chairperson for the commission. This person will come from among the judges of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and Trial Division, as well as four others. The hon. Speaker of this House will appoint four members who will sit on this commission. The four members who will sit on this commission, that will be appointed by the Speaker, will be citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, which I have great confidence in to do a great job for the people of the Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CORNETT:** Then, Mr. Speaker, the commission will be given the resources – whether it be employment, technical, or professional staff – as it is deemed necessary, to carry out this work efficiently and effectively.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what our Premier and what our government has done and said and proposed is to have this commission be appointed this year. They will have 120 days – that is four months – to do the work. Then this will allow the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer to do their work to make sure that this is prepared for the election in the fall of 2015.

The commission will go about and do its work. They will do the research. They will travel the Province. They will speak to people. They will hear the views, like in past commissions, past consultations, past reviews, and they will do that. According to section 15 of the act it requires that the commission be guided by “the principle that the vote of every elector in the province shall have a weight equal to that of every other elector.”

So, Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the Opposition argue their points why we should not do this and why we should not reduce the seats, they are making it sound that if we expand boundaries the communities that will be coming into existing boundaries now will not have a voice, will not be heard. We are legislators and if we

are elected to represent that district, it is our parliamentary legal right and duty to represent those people in a new district.

The commission will determine the proper division of the Province and the boundaries of electoral districts. I am very confident that the work can be done in time for a fall election, which everyone in this Province wants. They want a fall election. Our Premier stood up in this House and said there will be a fall 2015 election. Everyone in this House wants to reduce the seats in our Legislature. Our Premier is on record for saying it, the Leader of the Opposition is on record for saying it, and the Leader of the Third Party is on record for saying it.

Mr. Speaker, we had the analogy earlier about a football game. If we are all committed to the same goal, let's get started with this process so that we have the 2015 election, with reduced seats, for a more cost-efficient, cost-effective Parliament in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Because we will have less seats does not mean the people will have less representation, as I said earlier. That is what the Opposition will make you believe. I do not know about you and the members opposite, but I am sure the realignment of boundaries in the next general election – I do not know, like I said, about the members on the opposite side, but members on this side will campaign door to door, every door, in the new district that he or she will represent our party with, asking for their support to represent them in the Parliament of Newfoundland and Labrador. A good, effective, caring, concerned, and compassionate MHA will work hard to represent every person of the district no matter where the boundary is.

Mr. Speaker, my District of Port au Port will probably expand. It will require me to represent everyone in the district. What we are doing is about the people of the Province. The people have asked for this. We, as representatives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, have every right to do what they ask us to do, and that is to reduce the seats in the House of Assembly. They want this change, and we should deliver and we will deliver.

Whatever the number of seats are it is indeed, as parliamentarians, a pleasure, a privilege, an honour to represent people. Mr. Speaker, they place their trust and confidence in us to represent them. So when they ask for this electoral change, why shouldn't we deliver and deliver now for the election of 2015?

I am so humbled, Mr. Speaker, to represent the great and cultural district of Port au Port. Many friendships have been made over the years. If the district, let's just say, were to expand, new friendships will be made. There will be new challenges, new responsibilities, new successes, new working partnerships, and relationships. All of this will happen because of our commitment and concern to work for the people of our districts and our Province.

Je suis très sympathique de représenter les citoyens et les citoyennes de la circonscription de Port-au-Port. Je suis très fier, Monsieur le Président, de nos cultures, non seulement dans la circonscription, mais aussi sur la côte Ouest, et oui partout dans notre province culturelle et historique – Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde was up on his feet just a few minutes ago he talked about the famous 1993 Mahoney commission. Then there was a report. A report that then Premier Wells rejected. Who did he hand appoint? Who did he hand pick to do the next report, to do the next commission? What was the mandate? What parameters were set for that commission? Silence in the Opposition.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We have not read the report yet to get it.

**MR. CORNET:** Ask Mr. Wells.

Mr. Speaker, there is an evolution of seat changes or electoral boundary changes in our Province. I look at my district. In 1952 it was called St. George's – Port au Port. In 1957 there were two districts, Port au Port and St. George's. In 1975, there were three, Port au Port, Stephenville, and St. George's. In 1996, after the famous 1993 commission there were two districts, Port au Port, which takes in half of Stephenville and the other half of Stephenville is now in St. George's – Stephenville East.

Mr. Speaker, when the commission has completed its work it will then submit their work report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, who must in turn submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The report must be tabled in the House of Assembly within fifteen days of giving the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council if the House of Assembly is sitting. Or it has to be brought to the House of Assembly fifteen days after the beginning of the next session if the House of Assembly is not sitting at the time the report is received. The commission will be required to submit its report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety within 120 days after the chairperson is appointed and selected.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the bill, the proposed amendments will be examined in 2015, again in 2026, and every ten years after. The Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde when he was up on his feet also said: What is stopping a future government from changing it again? That is so true. There may be a need. It may be necessary to change the commission date. The population could decline more. The population could grow.

What we are saying today is that the people have been asking for a reduction of seats and we as a government are responding to the request of the people of the Province. I think that you should do your due diligence as Opposition members and join us in supporting this unanimously in the reduction of seats in our Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CORNETT:** Mr. Speaker, time is getting short on my speaking duties here tonight. I am very privileged to be up on my feet, and very privileged to have the opportunity to speak in my maternal native tongue here in the House of Assembly.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CORNETT:** It is a great privilege, Mr. Speaker, to represent the great people not only in my district, but the great people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, parliamentary reform is good. An effective parliament makes for good

government. Involved parliamentarians make good MHAs. Hopefully this will also probably spark the necessary interest in getting our voting population interested and involved in the political process as well.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all parliamentarians here in this hon. House to let's do this, let's do the boundary changes, and let's go to the fall election of 2015.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn):** The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are here this week debating Bill 42, which proposes to change the Electoral Boundaries Act. In changing the Electoral Boundaries Act it is a little bit premature because, properly speaking, the current legislation says we should do it in 2016. In 2016 we would have the benefit of a current census. The census we are going to be using is four years old. By the time we get around to doing it the next time, that census will have been fourteen years old and we will have had who knows how many elections on a census that will end up being fourteen years old.

Mr. Speaker, two of the issues that are important to people who are watching – one is how do we determine how many people should be in an electoral district? Do we decide it is simply based on votes as some people would say? Do we say that a vote is a vote is a vote no matter where you are to such a fine point that maybe you would divide a household to have the precise number, one district versus the other district? Clearly that would be ridiculous. That would not make any sense. We do not need that much precision, or so we say.

Furthermore, if members do nothing more than vote, then I suppose we could have a precise number of electors per Member of the House of Assembly. If that would mean that we would only come here and debate legislation, and pass or defeat legislation, amend legislation – if we have no other work other than to come here – then probably we could have the same number of voters regardless of geography.

Mr. Speaker, if we have decided that what the role of a Member of the House of Assembly is today – if the role of the Member of the House of Assembly is to deliver government services, then clearly some areas take a larger amount of effort to deliver the same amount of services as other areas do. Does that mean, for example, if somebody is in a rural district, in order for them to be able to provide the same level of government services, then they should represent a smaller number of people? If people who live in an urban area where people are more compact, there is less travel time and fewer communities, maybe only one community, then maybe they should be able to represent a larger number of people.

Maybe in a geographically large district somebody would have a smaller number of people, and in an urban district someone would have a larger number of people, keeping in mind that people in St. John's, Corner Brook, Grand Falls, or Clarenville, any of the larger centres, Labrador City even, they would tend to have more government services accessible to them close at hand so they would not have to travel to visit their member at extended distances.

What is the goal? What is the job description of a Member of the House of Assembly today? I say there are forty-eight people in the Province who should have no say in the job description. The forty-eight people who should have no say in the job description are the forty-eight Members of the House of Assembly. Who gets to go to work and tell their boss: I think this is my job, I think this is what I am going to do? Well, doesn't it mean we are doing the same thing?

If the voters have elected us to come here and represent them, and then so far through the term that we were elected to represent them, we say: By the way, we think this is what our job should be, we do not really care what you think anymore. There is an election coming some time in the next year or so and –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. J. BENNETT:** – we have decided we really do not care much about what the voters

think. We are not going to bother to consult with you. We are going to say this is the number it should be, and, by the way, the number is thirty-eight. If the number is thirty-eight, we are going to impose that number. Historically, Labrador was given a certain preference, preferential treatment in the number of members who would represent Labrador, and that was based on geography.

If you look at Labrador, Labrador has four very distinct areas and a population of 26,000 or 27,000 people, according to the numbers we will be using. The numbers we will be using are the 2011 census numbers. It really does not matter how many people are there today in 2015 because we are going to use numbers that we know are four years old anyway.

Labrador West is very distinct in that geographically it is remote. It is a mining centre with a relatively compact population. There are all sorts of similar issues, but remote from any other areas.

Labrador Centre, or the Goose Bay area, it is also geographically distinct. It has a relatively compact population but a whole range of different social issues than Labrador West would have, and it also now is the site for or adjacent to the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric development. So that is clearly its own distinct area.

Then north of Goose Bay, north of Lake Melville – in fact, Lake Melville includes Sheshatshiu. Maybe Torngat Mountains should include Sheshatshiu because the split we have now actually divides two Innu communities into two districts and maybe they should be in Torngat Mountains alone.

The Member for Torngat Mountains, my colleague, needs six days to travel to every community within his district because no community in his district is connected by a road. Is it fair that he should have to represent the same number of people as somebody in an urban area who may be able to walk across their district in an hour, and in some districts probably walk across their district in half an hour, or maybe walk the full length of their district in an hour? Somebody can walk a district in less than a day, whereas somebody else needs six days to travel by boat, snowmobile, or airplane to work

for one-quarter of the population of an urban centre.

Then there is the Southeast Coast and The Straits area, which also has a relatively small population. A small population but a spread out population, a population that borders on the Province of Quebec and is also separated by The Strait of Bell Isle, so people they would not have what you would call reliable transportation generally in the wintertime, unless you think an occasional trip to Corner Brook a couple of times a week by ferry – if you have to make medical appointments in St. Anthony, you take a twelve- or fourteen-hour ferry ride and then you drive back northward 500 kilometres or so. They have distinct issues and challenges.

Traditionally and historically, we have, in this Province, decided that Labrador should have four seats, but one part of the amendment to Bill 42 takes away that protection. It takes away that protection, based on the formula that is in another piece of legislation, based on the formula which says there is a certain tolerance that the legislation allows which says that we provide a 10 per cent tolerance.

Mr. Speaker, that means in the case of your district, you have somewhere between a 12,000 and 13,000 population, according to the numbers we are looking at, and if we take away a seat from Labrador then we need to represent, we need around 13,500, plus or minus 10 per cent, then that means your district should be intact. Your district should be fine. There should be no change at all; however, is it fair to put into place legislation which the formula will require the commission to take away a seat?

There is absolutely no way, with this change in legislation, that Labrador does not lose at least one seat. I have heard the Premier commit publicly to say that north of Lake Melville he is willing to agree there should be one seat. I am not sure how he can agree publicly unless we deal with it legislatively.

If you assume that Torngat Mountains should be its own seat, then that leaves approximately 23,000 people in the rest of Labrador. What do we do with the rest of Labrador? That means 9,000 or so from Lab West, we would need to add a couple of thousand from Goose Bay, a

four or five hour drive. We need to add a couple of thousand from Goose Bay and put them with Lab West. We take the rest of Goose Bay and all of the Southeast Coast and The Straits, now we have Labrador with three seats.

The member who represents part of Goose Bay would also represent Lab West. The other member who represents part of Goose Bay would also represent the Southeast Coast. That does not seem fair, and the logic of the cost saving that we are talking about simply is not there.

If you look at what we are dealing with, with Labrador – let's say Labrador was a nation on its own. If we were to say Labrador was a nation on its own – and I do not mean a province and I do not mean a territory. If Labrador were a nation on its own, by geography it would be the sixty-eighth biggest country in the world, behind the Philippines. By population, it would be sustainable. It would be sustainable because it would be a little smaller in population than Monaco and it would be a little bit bigger than the British Virgin Islands. Clearly, Labrador does not need Newfoundland. Newfoundland needs Labrador.

If Labrador were a nation on its own, it would have all of the minerals of Labrador West. It would have a road to the rest of Canada, so it would not need a fixed link. Why would it want a fixed link to an island that they are alienated from? Why would they need a fixed link if they can drive to the mainland? They are the mainland. They do not need to drive to the mainland. They can drive from Labrador West, from Goose Bay.

They would have Lake Melville. They would have the Upper Churchill. So why would they not charge an export tax on electricity, a couple of cents a kilowatt, and be the richest people not only in North America, but the richest people in the world? They would be the richest people in the world if Labrador were to receive – the 26,000 or 27,000 people were to receive the royalty value they could have for the resources that are in Labrador.

They would also have Muskrat Falls. They would have Muskrat Falls because they would be Labrador. They would have shipping through

Lake Melville. They would have a fishery on the coast. So why wouldn't this Province want to preserve four seats for Labrador in this legislation? Why would any government want to go down in history as alienating Labrador? Who would want to be the Benedict Arnold that would split up this Province, who would take the first step to go that far? Hopefully we will never go there. It is certainly not to be advocated, but it is certainly to be considered, because people in Labrador are – and I would encourage all members to spend some time in Labrador. Not just flying through and not just dropping, but meet and visit and talk with some people in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I have a son in law from Labrador, and I have visited Labrador a fair bit. Not the North Coast of Labrador, but certainly Sheshatshiu and all the of the other communities on the South Coast of Labrador. The first time I visited there was in 1969 on a motorcycle, and the road would only go to Red Bay. I did business there in years after that. So I would urge this Legislature and this government to preserve Labrador's four seats, regardless of whatever you do to the rest of rural Newfoundland. In Newfoundland and Labrador, keep Labrador's position in place.

Now, if we come to the rest of the Province, how do we deal with rural districts like my district and like the eight or nine other districts that have between 8,000 and 9,000 people? We have eight or nine districts that have between 8,000 and 9,000 people, and in the case of my district – and I will speak only about my district; I will not speak about the district for the Minister of Natural Resources, or for the Minister of Tourism, and a whole bunch of other jobs – and to be fair, he is doing a pretty good job because he is handling about three ministers' jobs up to now, plus House Leader.

So we have a number of seats in this size. In the case of my district by the time I get off the plane in Deer Lake – I am not complaining. This is not the best paying work I have ever had, to be perfectly frank. It is about the third-best paying work I have had, but it is the most rewarding work that I have had. I signed on for the work, and I am going to sign on for it again if my seat is still around. If my seat is not still around, I am going to come looking for one of your seats.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. J. BENNETT:** So you are on notice.

Not the Member for Cape St. Francis, because he has been there too long and it is too blue from Tom Hickey's days. No, no, no – but I might go after the Speaker's seat – and I do not mean this Speaker, I mean the other Speaker. Lewisporte is a pretty good place. I could go out to Twillingate. I have clients in Twillingate who I have defended, and I have relatives in Change Islands, so I am redistributing – so I am telling you we are coming after seats. We are coming after seats.

In my district, by the time you get off the plane it is 425 kilometres to drive from one end of my district and go out through all of Gros Morne National Park. It is thirty-five communities, it is fifteen incorporated municipalities, and it is eighteen local service districts. It is two hospitals, two police stations, and thirteen volunteer fire departments. That is in one district. The problem is there are only 8,500 people.

Ideally, you will give me a little more ground, a few more people, and keep the seat relatively intact, but there is no guarantee of that because just north of that is the Member for The Straits – White Bay North. He has to push southward so he can pick up another couple of thousand people or so, because even on the 25 per cent tolerance of 13,000 people, if you take away one from Labrador, which you really should not do, if you do not take away one from Labrador and leave Labrador with four then we have almost 14,000 a piece we have to represent, so you have to give him around half of mine and then the Leader of the Opposition, I guess he would get the other half of mine and go in with Deer Lake.

I am going to be coming looking for a seat. I like Baie Verte too, I like Springdale, and I like La Scie, all the places where I have represented the fishermen over the years on the food fishery and the whole works, more than happy to be there. Leading Ticks – all of the fishermen in Leading Ticks who I represented, so incumbents will be coming looking for your seat.

Mr. Speaker, you can see the issues that we are faced with in rural parts of the Province. In rural parts of the Province we have large geography, many needs, many communities and high expenses. The government is saying that the reason that they need to do this redistribution today is because of the big drop in oil prices. Mr. Speaker, I ask the people who are watching at home – if some people are still watching at home – I have a list of oil prices and oil prices – I understand what the minister is saying that everyone is going along fine until the price of oil just sort of fell in July.

The price of oil fell in July from \$105.22 to December, \$60.55, which is 32 per cent. It fell \$44.67 and that is a pretty dramatic fall. However, July of 2008 the price of oil was \$132.00 and by December it fell to \$41.53, which is lower than it is today. It fell \$91.20 in 2008, a 68 per cent drop, twice as big a drop as this past year and we did not redistribute. We did not have a financial crisis, or did we?

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is if the price of oil fell twice as far in 2008 in the same five months as it did in 2014 in the same five months, more than twice as much, it was \$132.00 and fell to \$41.53 versus being \$105.22 and falling to \$60.55 then this must be either a manufactured crisis or manufactured excuse and not the real reason for this debate on this legislation this week. Then we would need to look to find out what was different in 2008 and in 2014.

Well, 2008 was not an election year and 2009 was not an election year and 2010 was not an election year, so there is no need to worry about the price of oil by this government unless it is an election year. There is an election year coming now.

So even though the price of oil has fallen only 32 per cent, compared to 68 per cent six years ago, now we have an emergency. Now we have a crisis. We cannot possibly have a crisis, Mr. Speaker. The deficit that we are talking about, the billion-dollar deficit, over half of that was already planned. Over half of that deficit was already in the original Budget.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I am going to ask the hon. member to come back to the bill, relevance of the bill. Speak to the bill, please.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that. I am trying to connect to the speech of the Minister of Finance who said that we have this catastrophic fall in oil. I am trying to connect to all the members of government who claim oil fell so we have to save \$10 million in four years so we need to redistribute the seats.

Mr. Speaker, it is not true that this is the biggest drop in oil prices. So why are we fast-forwarding by at least a year, we have to run legislation through the House so we can work on census data that is four years old, instead of new census data?

Even the Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, is on quote from when he was in municipal government saying that you should wait until about a year-and-a-half after a census so you will have current numbers. Wouldn't that make sense today? It seems to make sense today.

All I can say is the reasons that are given for this debate are not the real reasons. People watching will know the real reasons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to stand tonight and speak on the Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act. I have been listening – this is the fourth day in the House. Yesterday was a break from this particular piece of legislation, but I have listened intently Tuesday and today on this act. I think most everybody in the Legislature has spoken to this. There are a few who have not, but I guess the pleasure of speaking this late at night is I do not have to compete with *American Idol*. That is a good thing. I know there are people from my district

who are keen to hear what I have to say, and there are people listening from my district who are keen to hear what I have to say.

Before I get into it, I have listened to most every speaker, and most every speaker who has spoken has mentioned Labrador. I am glad to see that, because it shows that Labrador is a big part of the Province. Labrador –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** – is not a separate part of the Province, Labrador is a very unique part of the Province, and I am glad to see that.

Before I get into the meat of what I have to say, I would like to give a bit of an explanation, first of all, about the act itself and then I would like to talk a little bit about the amendment.

The act itself goes back to 2006 when the boundaries were actually changed, and it talked about going into forty-eight seats. Of course, a lot of it is done based on population. There was a commission put in place, there was a Chair appointed to the commission, then the Chair appointed the commissioners and they went forward. So it is arm's-length, as I have heard a lot of my colleagues talk about in the House.

It is an arm's-length process from government; although, the Chief Justice will appoint the Chairperson and then the Speaker of the House, who is an independent member when they sit as Chair, appoints the commissioners – they appoint the four commissioners. In this particular case, as was in 2006, there would be two commissioners by choice of government. There would be one by the Official Opposition and one by the Third Party. That has not changed.

So that is how the commission is actually set up. You can have a Deputy Chair appointed to the commission, and that could be done by the five commissioners – the Chair and the four commissioners. If they so choose to appoint a Deputy Chair, they can do that in the auspices of the commission itself. It takes two members on the commission to form a quorum.

When I was reading down through the act – and for those who are home listening and people in

the gallery, reading legislation is not the most interesting thing because of the language that is in it. I am the first to admit I will sit back and read it two or three times to get my head around it because it can be fairly tricky when you are reading it. So, this particular act, because I have heard so much about it, I really wanted to understand it. I will tell you, I do not mind saying I have read the act about eight times. I read it word for word. I would pick it up and I would put it down and I would pick it up and I would put it down, and I am glad I did because I think I actually got my head around the act.

The important thing about only needing two members of the commission to form a quorum – and I have sat on many, many boards over the last fifty-plus years. The important thing about only needing two members to form that quorum is that it could be two members from the Opposition; it could be two members from the government. To me, it is a very fair process, the way that is written.

If somebody decides halfway through the process, when the commission is put in place, this is not for me, I really do not have the time or the energy to put into this, they could step away. The commission themselves have the right to replace that person. They do not have to replace that person, but they do have that right.

To be eligible to sit on the commission you cannot be an elected Member of the House of Assembly, of the House of Commons or of the Senate. You cannot be a member of that. I heard a member from across the way, from the Opposition say you put Judy on there. Judy is not on the commission, and I do not mind saying Judy is the minister who the commission is responsible for. That is the difference.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** In making that point, another point, sitting back here and listening right through the fall session and listening over the last few days and I have heard the Judy Manning – and I will use the word of the Member for Conception Bay South, his favorite word, was fiasco. He used that word today, and I was thinking he loves that word.



Listening to the Judy Manning fiasco from across the way, I think – and I am surprised no one else has said it. I know I am getting a little bit off here, Mr. Speaker, and I will get right back to the bill. Judy Manning is not one person. She works with a full Cabinet and a full caucus and they work together, and I speak from experience.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Mr. Speaker, in order to be eligible as I was saying, you cannot be an elected Member of the House of Assembly, the House of Commons, or the Senate. Then once the chief justice puts the chairperson in place there are time limits. It says it has to be expedited, as expeditiously as possible to put the commission in place.

As soon as the chair is appointed by a chief justice, who by the way has to be a judge, that chair of the commission very expeditiously then has to go to the Speaker of the House to have the other four commissioners appointed as quickly as possible. Then they go through the process – and I am not going to talk a lot about it because there are so many other speakers who have talked about the process and the duties and responsibility of the commission. None of that has changed.

Once they have their job done they go back to the minister responsible, then the minister goes back to the Cabinet. Right away, the minister goes back to the Cabinet. Then within a matter of fifteen days, if the House of Assembly is opened, if not, within fifteen days after the House of Assembly is opened, that has to be tabled in the House of Assembly.

The only things that are changing with the amendments are that we are changing the time from 2016 to 2015. In saying that, we are not spending any more money by doing it in 2015. The money was going to be spent and allocated for in 2016. We are just speeding up a process.

Now, I have been an elected Member of the House of Assembly for about three-and-a-half years. I was a municipal politician before that and before that, while I was in municipal politics, I was a business man. I can tell you that going back, not just a week ago but many, many

years ago, one of the things that was a common conversation around the table of many of the restaurants and pubs and bars that I owned was there are too many people in the Legislature. Why do we have so many people in the Legislature?

Now, why it has not changed before, I cannot answer that question; but I am very proud to stand here tonight and say I am part of a party, with a leader, that was bold enough to say we need to make the change. That is what is being done.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** That change is being made.

What we are doing is going from 2016 to 2015. No more money. No extra cost. We are just expediting it. We are going the members down to a certain number.

Another thing I have heard listening to a lot of people speak in the last few days, and a question that was asked on a regular basis: Where did the number come from? I thought the Minister of Finance in his opening statement articulated that quite well. He looked at the rules around what the commission would have and talked about population and discussed geography. That is where that number came from, the population we have in our Province today divided by a number of seats.

Then you would calculate around that. I am not a mathematician. I am certainly not the Minister of Finance. I cannot decide where they are going with that, but it made sense to me. When the minister talked about it, it made sense to me where they came up with the number. The other thing is to try and clean it up a little bit and getting the report in, in 120 days. That is the only changes that are being made.

In saying that, I listened to what the people had to say. There are a couple of things I have to say. Number one, I agree with the reduction. I agree very strongly with the reduction. I agree we need to debate, which I think we have done a very good job of doing, and I also agree that we need to look at geography. We need to put the geography into how we are going to make our decisions. There has to be, whether you want to

call it a calculated risk or making another bold decision, there has to be times when I am hoping they will make some difference.

I have heard everybody else talk about Labrador. There are only two people, I have to say – and I am going to point them out – who disappointed me. I was flabbergasted by one; one did not surprise me at all.

The Member for St. Barbe, I heard him talk a lot about Labrador. I heard him refer again to it being its own nation, using the word separatism, using the word alienation. It was disappointing, very disappointing, but most disappointing was the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair when I heard her use the word separatism. I heard you use the word alienation, and I heard you use the words attack on democracy.

I heard the Member for Harbour Main stand and talk about the day he went to Labrador in 2011 and was so proud to open the Trans-Labrador Highway, when he felt – I had arguments with him, because I sat on the Combined Councils. I was the President of the Combined Councils at the time and felt it should not be open. This is relevant to the geography.

May I say that it was the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, her members who were pushing to get that highway open so they could use it.

**MS DEMPSTER:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

On a point of order, the hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Labrador West wants to talk about the \$2.5 million savings that ten seats are going to bring in a year, why doesn't he talk about the \$20 million Humber Valley Paving fiasco since he heard the word?

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**MR. MCGRATH:** That is a great segue into where I was going, because if the hon. Member for Cartwright, who I had a sidebar conversation with over here, over the Humber Valley Paving catastrophe or whatever you call it, and I told you give me a list –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. member that he should address the Chair.

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will address the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, as I had a conversation with the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, I would be more than happy –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. member as well that he needs to come back to the bill. We are talking on the principle of the bill, Bill 42.

**MR. MCGRATH:** Okay, I will do that.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the geography of the regions in Labrador, if she has any geographical members in her district who are having a problem, she can bring it to me.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. Barbe on a point of order.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Member for Labrador West to wait until we get into committee before he launches personal attacks because he does not have to be relevant there.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it was very disappointing to hear a member from Labrador,

with only four districts in Labrador – again, she certainly talked about the size of Labrador, which I am very aware with. I went to Labrador thirty-seven years ago by choice. I am still there by choice, and I plan on being there for quite a few years yet.

I would also like to let the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair know I am fighting to keep four seats in Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Unlike the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair, I will not get on the open airways nor will I stand up in this sacred House and talk about separatism. I will do it with a party where I would be negotiating. I will not speak for my colleague for Lake Melville, I am sure he is quite capable of speaking for himself and will do so when he gets the opportunity, but I can guarantee you I have been negotiating with the Premier, with the Cabinet, and with the caucus, and I will continue to do it. I will continue to advocate for the four regions in Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Mr. Speaker, another comment I was taken aback by the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair, was when she said she is the spokesperson for Labrador.

Well, I can guarantee you, I have had the opportunity of being the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs. I have been to base camp in the Torngat Mountains, to the Fermont border, and everywhere in between. I have let the people in Labrador know I was representing all of them because that was my job, but I can guarantee you as long as Nick McGrath is where – I am not sure if I am allowed to say my own name in the House, if I am not, I apologize – but I can guarantee you as long as I am the representative for Labrador West, I do not need you speaking for my people.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Labrador West, and I remind him to speak to the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked to the people in my district, and I think I am representing the people in my district quite well. I talk to them every day. I have yet to come up to one person in my District of Labrador West, which is one of the largest districts in Labrador, the most heavily populated in Labrador, and I am proud to say a district that is doing well. We are going through a bit of a downtime right now but we are going to get through that. We are going to get through it as a population. I have yet to talk to one person in my district who is not in agreement with the reduction in the House of Assembly.

Now, like anybody else, any other politician sitting in this room, I am sure you have talked to members in your district and they have said: Yes, we want a reduction; yes, we want fewer members, but do not touch our district, do not cut us smaller. We are all going to hear that. That is why there is an independent commission put in place and it is not just a decision of government.

As I said, I will advocate for four seats in Labrador, and I will continue to advocate. I am not sure I will win my battle, but when I lay my head on my pillow at night I can guarantee you my constituents will know that I worked hard for them that day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I am under the understanding that this House will take a short recess.

The House is in recess for ten minutes.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

We will resume debate on Bill 42.

The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. RUSSELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bear with me; as you can tell, I have a little trouble with the voice here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, as I always do in this hon. House, it is a pleasure and an honour to be here and to get up and speak once again here tonight on Bill 42. As I always do when I stand in my place, I would like to give thanks to the great people of the District of Lake Melville. Through Churchill Falls, through Goose Bay, through Sheshatshiu, through North West River, through Mud Lake, time and time again, the people come out to support me. I am there to liaise with them, they are always there to have my back, and they know that I have an open door and they can always reach me. To them, I honestly say, thank you so very much for your continued support, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. RUSSELL:** We are here tonight to speak about Bill 42, of course, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act. We have heard this on this side of the House and we have had acknowledgement from the other side as well that we can get this done within a time period that allows us to have our election in 2015. I stand by that. That is what we want. That is what I want. That is what everybody in this House wants. That is what the Province wants, Mr. Speaker, and we can make that happen.

We have consensus in this House about the idea of parliamentary reform, the idea of bringing down the number of seats across the public of this great Province right from the tip of Labrador, from Nain, right down to the Avalon. We have consensus among the people as well, not only inside this House but outside as well, that they would like to see a reduction in the number of seats.

We understand, Mr. Speaker, in times such as this of fiscal restraint, we have to be very frugal, we have to be very prudent, and the cost reduction associated with this is evident. When

you talk about salaries, support staff, you talk about expenses, you talk about even in the long term about people not being included into the pension plan – and pension reform, of course, will be next – it is just being fiscally responsible. No matter which side of the House you sit on, we can all agree that with circumstances with the price of oil right now and our revenue streams of income to this Province, we all have to have that mindset.

Of course, across every district there is always a continued want, a continued need, but we have to watch our costs as we go forward. It is about making sure we make the right choices, Mr. Speaker. Again, going back to Bill 42 here, what we are talking about is that cost reduction as well.

What I am going to attempt to dominate my twenty minutes here with, Mr. Speaker, is about the four seats in Labrador. We have all seen it in the media, we have seen it in this House, we have listened to people across the away, they have listened to us – everybody is being really intent on listening and sharing their experiences about what they think about cost, or about House reform in general, and the Labrador seats. We have all seen it in the media; we really have.

I believe the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair talked about the weight of it. I absolutely acknowledge that and I think when we talk about jobs we talk about people being concerned about maybe their district is going to become too large now and I will not be represented, my voice will not be heard, my ideas of what governance is and what we need for our people and our communities, they have that concern that maybe if things changed they will not heard – all very valid concerns, Mr. Speaker.

I was on *Labrador Morning* this morning and they are like, Keith, where do you stand, or Minister Russell, where do you stand? Where do you stand? At that point in time what I committed to was the process behind amending Bill 42 to achieve what we all want to see in this House and across this Province, and that process of course is what we are doing right here.

We have heard lots of talk about democracy. What we are seeing right here is a bill comes to

the floor, amendments could be proposed, everybody gets their say, the people are represented and then we move forward. Eventually, we will come to a point in time when a commission is put together, a Chair is selected, and members are put together. They look at what the legislation says and they do what is best for the Province. We move forward and, hopefully, we get this done – I guarantee we will get this done within the time frame that allows us to have our election in 2015 with the four-year period (inaudible).

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will just say that I committed to listening. I committed to hearing everybody's opinion around all of these different parties here. I committed, as every other MHA in this House did, and we do every time, is listening to your constituents, listening to the community leaders. In my case, it was heavily laden with listening to Aboriginal people and Aboriginal leaders as well, Mr. Speaker.

With that, if we look across the way to the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains and we realize, yes, with no road access, with heavily populated Aboriginal people in his communities, Nunatsiavut Government in place – of which I am a beneficiary as well as a member – we recognize that special circumstance, we certainly do, but the justification is out there and it has been put here by other hon. members, both my colleague for Labrador West and the colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, that the other districts in Labrador are indeed unique too.

When you look at Labrador as a whole, what do you see? We call it the Big Land, Mr. Speaker. Geography – the location of Torngat Mountains was used in that decision, as with every other district. As my colleague for Lab West said at one time, somebody said, do you know what? I sent a document to the Goose Bay office. They knew he was in Lab West – could you run over during lunch hour and pick that up? Well, I do not advise my colleague for Lab West to do the seven-hour drive in one hour. It is just not a good idea, but having said that, when you look at Lab West, there are some trying times. We have seen commodity prices go down. We have seen hard times for Wabush Mines. What does our government do? We step in; \$3.8 million worth of grants helped them through their time of need.

What we have is a separate community, completely geographically separated. A different culture, Mr. Speaker, different groups of people, hardworking, honest, good people who have a place in this Province because of what Labrador delivers to the economy in terms of the mines that are going to come up, power lines. We see that. We see that going through to Churchill Falls as we come into Lake Melville, what I call the melting pot.

The Innu, the Inuit, the NunatuKavut people of Southern Labrador, we see all of them come together in Lake Melville right where Muskrat Falls is. We go from Lab West and we see IOC and Wabush Mines. Then we go to Upper Churchill and Churchill Falls. Then we come to Muskrat Falls in my district. Then, Mr. Speaker, we look up towards – I will say just quickly once again about Torngat Mountains. We look at the potential for uranium. We look at Voisey's Bay, and again extending down into Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, opportunities are going to be there. There is a lot of opportunity there.

Going back to Bill 42, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that when you talk about Labrador as a whole, these four districts with a population of about 28,000 people – and I have say this as Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs – over 15,000 people are Aboriginal. Not only do you have a high concentration within the Member for Torngat Mountains' district but you also have that across Labrador as a whole, which makes us completely unique when you consider the population of the Big Land with its massive geography, its unlimited and untapped resources, the majesty and the beauty of the land. All that put together in one you have to admit it is unique, it is special. It warrants a little bit of talk when you are talking about whether or not we need four seats in Labrador.

Then we talk about within the legislation, Mr. Speaker, the qualifiers, the quotients if you will. You talk about 10 per cent; well, there is maybe 20 per cent, 25 per cent in special circumstances. What I say to you is that the importance of Labrador right now, as evident in our history, what we are seeing is we are taking a real hit because of the price of oil. Right now we need Labrador more than ever in terms of diversifying our revenue streams as we prepare for the long-

term sustainability of the power and the robust economy that we have right now in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need that.

All the people of Labrador need to know, regardless of population and geographic separation and whether or not they are Aboriginal, whether or not their particular community right now is mature to a point, that they have a wonderful megaproject or whatever, they need to know their voices are heard. They are separate; they are distinct. They need to be represented, Mr. Speaker.

You say, where am I going with all of this? Mr. Speaker, it is about the justification for those four seats. I just heard my hon. colleague from Lab West stand up, and what does he do? He talks about the need for those four seats. I believe in that as well, Mr. Speaker.

A lot of people have wondered, Keith, where do you stand? Minister Russell, where do you stand? You have an obligation. It takes a lot of hard work to be a Cabinet minister, I am learning that. I have to take guidance from fellow ministers, from our Premier, from our Deputy Premier. You have to understand that just because somebody wants to know where you stand personally, you have an obligation to your colleagues. You have an obligation to this government and our civil servants, and you have an obligation to the people to do what is right by the Cabinet and its structure. That is a very hard thing to transition into, Mr. Speaker, when you are used to firing out your opinion as you see fit.

We have seen a passion from our representation from Labrador. We have seen the passion from all districts across this great Province. We have seen that, Mr. Speaker, and it is not lost on any one of us on either side of the House. Sometimes it gets heated, and just to talk about that a little bit in reference to this bill. We understand politics, we understand optics, we understand when they get up and put a petition out from my district. I follow the petitions, and it is wonderful to see some Labrador names on these petitions from time to time.

We committed to coming here and we committed to saying, what do you have to say? What do your people want you to say? We have done that, Mr. Speaker, and it is part of this

process with Bill 42 here to say, let's go through the Legislature with this bill. Let's look at how a commission would want to structure this House and make sure that everybody has that voice in this House. That is all part of it, and I have done that. I think everybody has. We have had a great debate up to this point.

I do want to make some commentary about some of the debate up to this point. You call it rebuttal, you call it answering, giving an opinion maybe on what was said in specific reference to the four seats in Labrador. I have to say, I am not looking to be controversial. I am not looking to take somebody down personally but I think we have a responsibility in this House, not only to the people of each of our districts, but a responsibility when it comes to governance, when it comes to opposition, when it comes to fighting for what you believe in.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say – and I will talk about the Member for Torngat just for a little bit here. I just want to say one quick thing about the Member for Exploits. There was a little bit of a heated debate where he was talking about roads and how it is not unique in anyone's district to not have a lot of roads. It was taken out of context, but a hon. man, as the Member for Exploits is, went over and offered an apology. That is how it works. People see the heat of the moment when you are at home but sometimes you do not get to see that we are all people here. We respect each other. We respect each other's opinions, and we are willing to reach out personally when sometimes there is a little misgiving there.

I will correct the Member for Torngat. He did get up in the House – I am only reading from Hansard here – saying that the Member for Lab West and I were in support of getting rid of four seats. Never at any time did we say that, Mr. Speaker, and never at any time did our leader, the Premier, say that as well. We were prepared to be open, to keep options on the table, Mr. Speaker, if you will.

In terms of one more comment from the Member for Torngat, he did say that, more or less, Labrador was being treated like a shed door that was being opened and we take what we want. Mr. Speaker, when some of the projects that we have, that Labrador contributes to our

economy and allows us to diversify our revenue streams, you have to consider, you have to be responsible in your messaging. You have to say there were some antiquated royalty arrangements in place and some power regimes that really did not see us get the lion's share, Mr. Speaker.

That is why we have to work together in unity, Mr. Speaker, we have to be together on all aspects, the Labrador portion and the Island portion together. Together we are strong. Together we will realize our full potential and begin to have an economy that cannot be touched by any volatility in one commodity or the other. We will be able to balance, and hopefully we do not get to a situation where we might be coming to where we have to make some hard calls, and show some true leadership. That does not bode well politically, but sometimes it is what is right for the people of the Province. Sometimes you just have to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Moving on, I would just like to say in terms of some of the things we have heard in the House and I guess the Member for Lab West, my friend and colleague, brought up. We did hear some separatist talk, and I am not going to try and single anyone out. It is not about beating up on an individual. What it is about is the statement I just made. It is about unity. It is about making sure that people are well represented.

Bill 42 is going to help us achieve that and make sure the balance is struck. Labrador needs to have its voice as well, but we cannot afford to be irresponsible to the point where we are willing to compromise our unity as a Province. The strength and resources of the Big Land, the oil of the Island portion and the sheer numbers and the professionalism, all the people we have, the wonderful communities and the experience we have, our education system and the young people coming through the system, we cannot compromise that, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. RUSSELL:** We have to stand together, and that is my point. If you were to ask me as a native son in Labrador why talk of separatism, why does it bother me so much, and why is that coming up in the topic of Bill 42, where we are

trying to justify keeping seats and moving seats and what that magic number is, it is because of my heritage.

I have stood in this House many times, Mr. Speaker, and I have talked about my wife Brenda from the Northern Peninsula. I am born and raised in Labrador, yes, but we have a fisherman's daughter, the daughter of Rosie and Whyman up in Green Island Brook on the Northern Peninsula.

My kids, Mr. Speaker, know that dad is a Labradorian and know that mom is a Newfoundlander. They know that her dad was a fisherman and mine was an electrician. We do not come from money. We are average, everyday people who strive and work to make a way in this world. That is what every Newfoundlander and Labradorian – that is the opportunity they should have. We help foster that, but we have to be united.

I think about my Aboriginal grandparents, gram and gramps, Eliza and Norman Edmunds who came down from Northern Labrador to make a way for their family. I think about my nan and pop Frank and Maude Russell who came from the Island when my dad was only two to go to work at the American base just to make a way for themselves, Mr. Speaker. You have to take those things into consideration when you do make comments that could even intensify any type of advocacy for separatism. It cannot be tolerated.

I see my time is winding down. I just want to talk a little bit more about the absolute unique characteristics of the four districts in Labrador. When I talk about the Innu you see a beautiful people and a strong people with culture, Mr. Speaker. When you talk about NunatuKavut, when you start moving down to Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair – I had the pleasure of spending some time with them facing some real issues, hard rural locations where water and sewer is hard, facing relocation, issues that we face all across the Province.

I spent years in the Legislature up in Torngat Mountains, Mr. Speaker, fighting for the people of Lake Melville and fighting for what they thought, too. I saw how they lived. I did

everything I could to help improve those circumstances. That is what we have to do.

When it comes to Labrador, Mr. Speaker, are we unique? Yes, in geography. In people, yes, we are. We have a wonderfully diverse culture, like I said, heavily laden in Aboriginal population. We welcome all people. It is not just about Aboriginal people either; we welcome all people. Do we have our challenges? Yes. Do we have resources? Absolutely, that should benefit everybody, no matter where you live in every district in this great Province.

When it comes to Bill 42 I just want to make sure that we move forward together. Let's get this done. Put politics aside. If we are going to have an election in 2015, let's do it. Let's get the right number of seats here and let's be fiscally responsible together, Mr. Speaker. Let's get to a point where we do not have to use politics, putting digs at each other and say you are not representing your district. We have to have a measure of respect for each other, Mr. Speaker. That is where I want to see us go. We have to get there.

With Bill 42, yes, it is contentious because we are talking about those jobs, cuts, all of those things. When you look at Labrador as a whole, and I talked about Nunatsiavut, I talked about NunatuKavut, I talked about the Innu Nation, Sheshatshiu, and Natuashish, and I talked about the communities in all of the districts represented here in this Legislature, I would just like to end by saying that Labrador, the Big Land, and its unique landscape and geography, its unique people from all walks of life, the beauty of the Aboriginal groups and their cultures, and I am proud to be a native son of Labrador – ultimately, that is one of the greatest things that I have in my life, Mr. Speaker.

People saw in this House that we over here on this side of the House, we have true leadership. We have the flexibility to meet with a private member's resolution of the NDP to say, do you know what, let's form an all-party committee and let's change our course of direction in order to serve the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, I would like to say, with my last few seconds, that I would like to announce that in the Committee stage to come in the debate for Bill

42, under the leadership of our Premier, I would just like to say that we will be putting forth an amendment that will protect and maintain the four seats in Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to stand for a few minutes to speak on Bill 42. I just heard the minister – if I am correct – saying that if we go to Committee the government will put in an amendment to protect the four seats in Labrador. Is that what I just heard? Mr. Speaker, I am some proud of Dwight Ball and the two members for Labrador –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. JOYCE:** – who Monday morning said Labrador is unique. We have to stand for Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We have to make the stand. I am proud of this Liberal caucus. I am proud of the two members for Labrador and I am glad that the government is stepping in with us to help Labrador and make sure Labrador is protected, like they should be. I am so proud. Thank you, government, for doing that. Thank you, Dwight Ball, and the Liberal caucus.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JOYCE:** Legislatures do work and this is a prime example, Mr. Speaker. Win, lose, or draw, Labrador is the winner after that statement and after what we heard here today.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak about some of the changes to this act. We all agree; there should be a reduction. The number, the process sometimes is what gets convoluted and we have a few problems. We agree with a reduction; we agree that there should be changes. The amount is what we disagree on and how it is done. As we all know, the act is for every ten years to



come in and have a change. Mr. Speaker, the government, in their wisdom, said okay, we are going to speed that up and move it ahead a year early. That is the government's prerogative. It is our prerogative to defend it. It is our prerogative to make amendments, which we did do for Labrador.

The process, the 120 days is part of the process that I feel is wrong, that it will not give time for the presentations around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I really feel that. Because once the process starts in 120 days, what if every community wants to have a presentation? Are they going to be heard? Are they going to go out and have public consultations?

I know in the act it says minimum of two: one for Labrador and one for the Province. This is my concern: Will the committee be squeezed and say, oh, we shall have the report in 120 days? Will they stop people in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador from having their democratic process of being heard in this report? I am not saying they are not, but I am asking is there a possibility because of a short time frame? That is the concern, Mr. Speaker. It is a legitimate concern because there are a lot of people who have their various opinions on this.

As I said before, this is going to be done for ten years, so we have to do it right. Will four months make sure it is done right, Mr. Speaker? That is the question. Will it be done right so that for ten years, the process was done right?

We already said we are not going to go with the census of 2016, Mr. Speaker. To me, that is one mistake that we are making, but anyway it is the government's prerogative. You are the government, and we have to live with that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, emotions run high. In a debate like this, emotions right high. We see it here in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. We saw it here today, we saw it here yesterday, and we have seen it here tonight. Emotions run extremely high.

I just want to tell the people of this Legislature, I have been through this. In 1993, I made a presentation. In 1993, I was a parliamentary assistant at the time, but I went up and made a

presentation. It was just on the numbers because I felt the commission did not have the numbers properly. At the time, it was all going around the Province having hearings, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you, emotions run. We are in this House, the forty-eight of us; we can see how emotions run high. They really do. It is human nature to make sure that our views are heard on behalf of our constituents, on behalf of ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure people in this Legislature – and I will get back and I will explain why I am saying this. I will assure the people in this Legislature there are going to be towns against towns because of this; there are going to be communities against communities. This is what is going to happen. I do not think anybody in this Legislature is going to be saying that or promoting that, but it is human nature. There will be towns and communities fighting against each other.

I know in 2006 when there were changes to the boundaries, there were streets divided. There are going to be streets against streets, people complaining because your street is one area of a district, my street is and another street. I have been through it. Trust me, emotions are going to run high with all this.

We as parliamentarians, Mr. Speaker, are going to be faced with neighbours against neighbours. We are going to be faced with family members in one town against family members in another town. We have to be prepared for that. We have to be prepared and ready for that. We have to ensure that if this process goes ahead, we have to do it in such a way that it is as easy as possible for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this is going to be hard on a lot of members because a lot of members are going to be torn. I am speaking from experience. A lot of members are going to be torn. When you have one community taken out of your district that has been there historically and put in another district and you have to make a decision, do I stand up for this community or do I stand up with the community that is going to be part of the district, it is going to be tough. It is really going to be tough.

Mr. Speaker, when I went through all this back in 1993 and in 2006 as an elected member, I saw a lot of people become bad friends. If there is anything that I can ask this Legislature to do, and this is in all honesty, whatever is decided in this House of Assembly in the next three, four, or five days, that we act as leaders in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and lead. Whatever happens after that, ensure that we keep the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador towns together, communities together, districts together because I can assure you there can be a lot of division that may take years to heal.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, Bay of Islands could be affected. I will be the first to say it – the Bay of Islands could be affected. I want to make this commitment here in this Legislature and make it on the record. If the Bay of Islands is affected, I will fight as hard as I can for the Bay of Islands and ensure that they are going to get the proper representation in whatever district the electoral boundary commission may decide; but, at the end of the day, I would ask the people to be united whatever the decision will be, whatever it will be. I think all of us here agree that at the end of the day we need a united Province.

We need to fight for it, we need to bring forth our issues, we need to ensure that all parts of our districts are well represented, and I am sure everybody in this Legislature will do that, Mr. Speaker. That is one thing that we have to do as parliamentarians.

There are times when we are going to see – and I have been through it – members pitted against members. There are going to be seats combined where there are two members in this House of Assembly going to be one seat. There are going to be members pitted against members. It is sad, but that is the reality of it. That is the reality.

I say again to the members who are going to be faced with that, face it head on and face it with gusto. At the end of the day, win or lose, stand united because I can assure you this is going to take years to heal once it is done. That is my request for everybody here tonight, Mr. Speaker.

I go back to the legislation itself. We all know that the Chief Electoral Officer said that he needs four months. He needs four months. So

you take September 25 back the four months, we are at the end of May. If the commission starts their work February 1 or is appointed February 1, the clock starts ticking. We have four months – very tight timelines, very tight, Mr. Speaker, extremely tight.

As I said earlier, in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador everybody in their communities have a right to be heard. I just need a commitment from the commission – and I am not predetermining and I am definitely not putting any negativity on the commission, but I just want to ensure that whoever wants to appear in front of this commission in Newfoundland and Labrador has the opportunity and they cannot be rushed because of the timelines. I need that commitment to feel assured that everybody will have a right to appear. Everybody has a right to be heard. Everybody has a right for their point of view to ensure the commission would understand each unique situation in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I heard members opposite – and I am not being critical here. I definitely am not being critical. I heard members talking about timelines, how if you are told to do something. I will just give you one example. I am not saying this is not going to happen. I am going to say it is going to be very tough. I will just give you one example.

The review on Bill 29 is delayed. The report will not be put in until the end of January. That is just the latest one. That is just the latest report in this Province that this government asked to go out, gave a timeline, they came back and said we just cannot do it. There is just not enough time. That is my fear.

I have a commitment from the government and the government said publicly that once the report – you have 120 days, fifteen days to the Legislature, then, by law, if it is not ready then we revert to the electoral boundaries which are in place now.

That is a safeguard for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The government has said it on many occasions that this is not a delay tactic. When you get the Premier of the Province standing up and saying this is not a

delay, the election will be in 2015, people in the Province have to believe the Premier. When the Premier stands up and says that, we have to say okay, Premier, there will be an election.

We have to go on the basis that if this timeline is not met in 120 days and if it is not in the fifteen days when it goes to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that will stop the work and the election will go ahead in the pre-existing boundaries, Mr. Speaker. That is the commitment from the Premier and you have to take the Premier on face value, his word, and I accept that.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, just my view, with this being rushed in now because of the reasons that were given – and I am not going to get into the reasons because they have been hashed here tonight. Mr. Speaker, in 2016 we would have had a new census and I can assure you the census is going to be different from what we are going to do this on now. The electoral commission will have a census that is outdated, five years outdated, so the information they are going to go on – and I just want to put this on record. The information they are going to go on, that is going to make it for the next ten years, will be the census. It was five years old. Instead of having an up-to-date census – for fifteen years this is going to be in place for a census which is outdated.

I personally feel it is fundamentally wrong to do that. I personally feel that, and I understand – I will not get into the reasons. I will not debate it. I do not want to harp on the reasons why it was passed and why we need it done now. I will not get into the reasons why or how I can say, well, here are other ways.

Fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, if you are going to make a decision for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, people of Newfoundland and Labrador expect you to have the most up-to-date information, they do. They honestly do. Mr. Speaker, I want it on record that I feel, fundamentally, we should wait until the new census but the government decided not to, and that is the government's prerogative in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Premier say on numerous occasions – and I will use Bill 29 – when they came back and said, okay, we need it

done. The Premier's statement, and this rings in my ear, we better do it right than fast. That was Bill 29 when they asked for it, and he said, what is the rush? It is better to have it done right than to do it fast.

My question, isn't it better to do it this year right than fast? Isn't it better to ensure that we have the most up-to-date information? Isn't it better to make sure there is a timeline in place that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian who wants to speak in front of this commission has an opportunity? Mr. Speaker, those are the Premier's words, not mine. I agree with him. I agree with him 100 per cent, that it is better to take your time.

Mr. Speaker, there is one more point. This may come off a bit – we heard about technology. We heard a few people speaking last night about how technology has changed in the last five or six years. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt it has. Absolutely, there is no doubt. Again, I am not trying to be critical, but these are the things – after being in the Legislature enough times, you hear different things.

When we were debating Muskrat Falls, we have to buy power from Nalcor for the next fifty years. Technology does not matter. If any new technology came into it for energy, it does not matter for this government because it does not fit their bill. Technology has changed, so we can go ahead and do all of this now. Forget about the census, forget about it being rushed. Forget about not having a timeline so that people can have a proper hearing for everybody who wanted to meet, but technology has changed. I just hope you are right, I honestly do, Mr. Speaker. I hope the government is correct on this, but I do have some major concerns.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I am just going to say a few words right from a person who has been through this twice. We all debate. People out there see us debate in the House of Assembly. People see us sometimes heckling each other, and some members do heckle each other. I will be the first to admit it, Mr. Speaker, but this is one time that if you want to heal wounds in Newfoundland and Labrador, if you want to ensure you do not have towns pitted against towns, members in this House are going to be pitted against members, trust me. Trust me on

this. I tell everybody, I have been through it. I know in 1993 it almost happened in the Bay of Islands, trust me.

What we need to do in this Legislature, as leaders of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, let's work together to work this out somehow so that if it is going to go through, let's make it as painless as possible for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are all legislators. We know, and it happened to me, you can get voted out pretty easily. You can get voted out. If you are voted out, it is the will of the people. It is the majority. You cannot lose when the majority says we want this, we want that. You cannot lose, Mr. Speaker. That is what democracy is all about.

Mr. Speaker, as leaders, as people who are going to go through a lot of difficult times over the next four or five months, reach out, because it is going to be tough. Reach out to your fellow MHAs, reach out to this side, reach out to the NDP, reach out to the leaders in your community, and let's have an open discussion about this because, at the end of the day, we all are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We all need to stick together to ensure that the leaders of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the forty-eight of us here, will do what we were elected to do and lead the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When all of this is said and done, I just wish everybody the best for their communities, the best for their towns, and I just hope the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will come together. We have to do that, Mr. Speaker. We have to promote that and we have to ensure that.

There are going to be a lot of times when we are going to go into difficult meetings, Mr. Speaker. We have to park our ego at the door, we have to park it at the door. When we park our ego at the door we have to go in with the concept that we need to take this head-on, Mr. Speaker, and go to towns that are going to be pitted against each other and say okay, we understand, but things are going to work out. We need to do it. I have been through it. I have seen people who were running, still not talking to each other. I have seen communities still not talking to each other over some of the things that were said during this heated debate. It will get heated.

I say to everybody here, let's stick together as parliamentarians to lead the community. I know we are going to have our differences. I will be the first to stand up after this speech and point out the differences. If there is anything that I want to leave with everybody here tonight is that it is going to be difficult times and we have to help people through it. Some of us may lose our jobs over this, but I guarantee you it is a lot easier to lose our jobs than to have communities torn apart for the next fifty or sixty years because of this. We need to make sure it does not happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to stand and have a few words with respect to Bill 42. I know it is late, and we have come a long ways in this debate since early in the week.

I want to recognize the comments made by my colleague opposite and the experience that he shared, and the recognition that this is not an easy task by the people of this House and the recognition that it will not be an easy road as we go forward with this fundamental decision on how we are going to operate the Legislature of the House and how we will represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will say in listening to his comments, I think for all of us, we have come to a realization that when you step into this job it is not an easy job, but the minute you think the job is about you, then you are in trouble as a politician. That is why we are here. That is why we have leadership on both sides of the House. That is why we had agreement that it is time for us to move forward, modern-day legislation with a modern House. It is not about us. It is about the people we represent. It is about what we are going to offer to the people of the Province.

That is not party politics, Mr. Speaker. That is what we all do; that is what we all commit to do. We are proud of the work we do. We are proud of our jobs. I would say everybody in this House wants a job at the end of the day and needs a job, but beyond that there is something greater, and that is the conviction that we all have in this House.

When we started this discussion there was one goal in mind – and I will give credit to our Premier who had the courage, because this has been kicked around for a number of years. Our Premier had the courage – granted, members opposite have made comments around the size of the House. The Leader of the Opposition, full credit, has made comments as well, and maybe the Leader of the Third Party, about the need to reform the House and shrink the House.

I give credit to our Premier who had the courage – and it does take courage, because he will impact every one of us and the people of the Province – to go forward on principle that we need to reduce the size of the Legislature. Given today's modern technology that we reference and all other aspects of improvements in the Province, we need to move forward and shrink the Legislature. That took courage, Mr. Speaker, and I give him full credit.

What we have done this week is debated, quite well, as to how we are going to do that. We set some parameters around that and then we debated back and forth the spirit of what we do in the Legislature any time we make significant changes or decisions for the people of the Province, we need to have a healthy debate and we have certainly seen that. We have been able to come to some resolutions, come to some agreements, and that is what it is about.

Bearing in mind, at the end when we walk out of here and decisions are made, fundamentally the decision is led by the Premier, but certainly agreed to by the members of this House, we will make the Legislature of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador much smaller than it is today. That is the principle, that is the goal, and we will achieve that collectively, no question.

Mr. Speaker, through this debate probably one of the areas that has been talked about the most,

so far, is the area of Labrador. I have had the fortune to be in three of the seats of Labrador. I have not been in Torngat Mountains yet. I want to speak about that for a second, about the four members of Labrador and the process during this debate. I give credit to all four of them on how they handled because it has been a very difficult situation for them.

For the members opposite, they stood and they did what they had to do to represent their districts. They spoke well. They spoke with passion. We can debate some of the things they said but, Mr. Speaker, they are representing the people they have been elected to represent. They took the avenues that most often when you are sitting in Opposition you take. You stand, you slam the governments, and that is all a part of what we do, Mr. Speaker. You stand and challenge and fight and you do the Open Lines, you do the radios, and you do the interviews. That is okay, Mr. Speaker. That is how it works.

We can go back, and no matter which side of the House or which party is on which side, that is how it happens. Opposition takes that route; but the other route, when you are in government, as we have seen so often, no matter which party is in government you see it, the members often take a different route, working through behind closed doors, meeting with leadership, discussing with their colleagues, influencing around the table, having discussions. I give full credit to the two members, our colleagues for Labrador as well, who took that route to very effectively – as the others for Labrador did – to deliver a message to this House and certainly to the entire Province around the challenges of Labrador, the geography of Labrador in particular, and the challenge to provide representation that they wanted to provide. Mr. Speaker, they were very convincing in doing so. So I give full credit to the four members for Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, a big concern is around the timing of the election. The Premier has been clear, members have been clear of what we want, and the members on the opposite side of this House have been making it clear they want an election in 2015 as well.

The Member for Bay of Islands is very clear. If everybody wants 2015, then we will get there. The route is co-operation. He talked about it, and I am sure we are going to get co-operation through this whole process.

Throughout the debate, members opposite have cited so many other studies and provinces. I think tonight, maybe, the Member for Virginia Waters referenced the 185 days that it took in Ontario. One hundred and eighty-five days is quite a few days more than 120; it is sixty-five days. I am not like the Minister of Finance; I can get it. It is sixty-five days.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at that just for a second and put it in some perspective, because there are two sides. If you look at Ontario and 185 days, Ontario has 107 seats that they work with; we have forty-eight. Ontario has a land mass more than double of ours, over 1 million square kilometres, so their geography is a challenge as well.

Mr. Speaker, the other side, when you talk about a commission and a process and allowing people to have input whether it is face to face, whether it is through a Web site, or other ways, Ontario has twenty-four times more people than we do. We have 500,000 people; they have over 12 million people. They did the work in 185 days, according to the Member for Virginia Waters.

I point that out, Mr. Speaker, because if you want to use examples, then there are two sides to that. They were able to get all of that work done in 185 days. I believe and I have confidence that five people from this Province, one appointed by the judge, four appointed by you, the Speaker, five competent, capable, knowledgeable people who will be put on a commission are going to be dedicated to do a task in four months. I believe they are going to be able to get that work done.

Now, the key part of that – and I would agree with members opposite – is the opportunity for people in Newfoundland and Labrador to have input. We all want that. How that input takes place, there is obviously a lot of different ways to have input. As for seeing how it would shape, I think the second day after this was announced people were sending us maps as to how it would look. Two days – granted, we could all sit down and do up a map; but, at the end, that is what we

are going to end up with, is a map of the electoral districts of the Province, and it will change, no question.

It just points out some of the concerns, are they founded? One could certainly argue no, they are not. Four months is a considerable time for five competent people to do a piece of work. I think, comparably, you can go to other provinces and see where that piece of work has been done.

Are the timelines tight maybe? Well, let's stop for a second around the debate around the principles because they are all important, the number of seats and how it is going to work; but, at the end of the day, our commitment, our conviction to this, the conviction from our Premier is that we need to reduce the seats of the House and we are going to achieve that, and that is what this is all about. As we debate the different nuances, the different details of this which are all important, it is important we give people an opportunity to have a say. At the end of the day, this Legislature is going to make a decision and inform the people of the Province in the tough financial situation that we are in, the tough fiscal times that we are in, we are going to save money; but we are also going to stand symbolically and tell the people of the Province – because I can tell you, as we all know in our districts, they are all looking at us. What are you going to do? They are all looking at us to see what we are going to do.

While added to the fiscal responsibilities that we have, we also have an obligation, symbolically if nothing else, to stand to the people of the Province and say, do you know what? We are going to do things. We are going to lead. We are going to make tough decisions. We are going to work together to do what is right for the people of the Province. Symbolically, we need to send that message. I think when this is all done, that is exactly what we are going to do, collectively, in this House.

As we move forward with the legislation, we will look at the right way to get this done, the commission to be put in place, the Chief Electoral Officer will get his work done; but we will have achieved something that has been talked about for a long time. We will have the leadership in place to deliver on that, Mr. Speaker, and we will have a smaller Legislature.

We will find that balance. People want a smaller Legislature, but they also want representation. That is going to be the task for all of us. All of us who put their names on the ballot in the next election, that is going to be the true test.

That is where you are going to have to stand up and do more work. That is where we are going to have to find ways to provide that representation, and I am sure we will. I am sure everybody is committed. I am sure the four members of Labrador will be equally as committed and motivated to go out and do their work and be able to continue to deal with the challenges that they have in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to have a few words around that and recognizing that through this whole debate at the end we will make a decision here. Again, I recognize the leadership of our Premier and the courage to stand up and say we are going to need to do this.

We will end up, Mr. Speaker, with a smaller Legislature. I believe we will end up with co-operation in this House. I believe we will get to where we need to be and I believe the work will get done. I certainly believe the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will continue to have good, strong representation, just as they do today.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege for me to stand in this House tonight, too, and speak to Bill 42. Of course, it has been a long day for many of the members right now and our staff as well, as they have been in this House listening to members on both sides debate Bill 42 and the impact that it would have on future Legislatures in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The reduction in seats is nothing new for me as leader. Almost two years ago in March of 2013 it was the first opportunity that I had to discuss seat reduction within the Province and the impact that it would have on the Legislature. At that time, I had given a number and I knew it was important then that there would be a committee that would need to be involved to actually help us work through that process.

That process, as we know now, as we have heard from many members speak tonight, would have been started in 2016. It is important for all of us as we find ourselves in this very difficult time, if there is an opportunity where we can save money for people in Newfoundland and Labrador, find a more efficient and just as effective way to represent the people who elect us, well indeed we should do that. We should make sure that if there is an opportunity available to us, we should exercise that right and do so.

We find ourselves here today with Bill 42. There will be a series of amendments. This bill affects the current piece of legislation that is there. It really impacts about five to six sections, one of which would be the number of seats. We will see where those amendments go over the next few hours, as we listen to people debate the number, what will be the number that will be agreed upon and voted upon as we get to the Committee stage, and, therefore, the final days when we will actually vote on this piece of legislation.

Of course, one of the things for me, too, is that when you put in place a committee – and many members have spoken about how that committee will be made up. Of course, we know the chief justice would have an appointment here, that person would appoint the Chair. So it is important that that person would get in place as quickly as possible. We understand by the discussions we have had that indeed could happen within five days. Then there would be four other people who would be elected, representing the political parties in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is a process that we saw similar to what we saw in the mid-1990s where we saw all parties represented. It was on that committee where we saw the first female committee member. At that

time, we know that was an exercise that lasted about two years, but in the final analysis it was that decision back in the 1990s that led us to where we are today with forty-eight seats in this Legislature.

This process is not new. It goes back many years, when back in 1973 – and when I look around here there are probably people in this Assembly that were not even born at that particular point in time. Commissions are nothing new. In 1973 we saw the first commission. The second commission was in 1983. The subsequent commissions and commissions prior to the one that we will see in place in the next few weeks, these people have done a remarkable job when it comes to redrawing the districts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have been as high as fifty-two districts when the District of Torngat Mountains was added. This was back in the mid-1970s, I guess it was. In 1979, that was the first time when we saw Labrador with four districts that were carved out.

I want to speak to that for a few minutes because much of the debate today and this week and certainly within the media and others that have chimed in to this debate – and we encourage that, I will say – is around Labrador. On Monday morning when we spoke to the media and we laid out what I felt were three amendments, three reasonable amendments, to this piece of legislation, we laid out the need to carve out and protect the four seats for Labrador.

There is a long-standing history there. When you look back at the report that was issued in the mid-1990s, it was that report, too, that spent a lot of time, an extensive amount of time, speaking about the importance of carving out and protecting four seats in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, last weekend I spent a fair amount of time reflecting on this piece of legislation and the impact that it would have on Newfoundland and Labrador as a Province, but a lot of time thinking about the impact that it would have on Labrador. I spent a lot of time thinking about, in the last three years, a number of trips that I made there. It is pretty easy to make the argument – and we have four members in this House of

Assembly today that call Labrador their home. The people and their constituents live there; they have been elected by the districts in Labrador. So I thought a lot about this last Saturday and Sunday as I would plan my day for Monday.

Through that reflection there was one thing that stood out to me, and I want to remind some members in this House tonight that in just a few days, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will remember a tragic story in Labrador. Of course, that was the loss of Burton Winters. In the next few days a lot of us will be reminded of what Burton Winters went through. In February of that year, before the House of Assembly opened in March, I took a trip to Makkovik with my colleague for Torngat Mountains. It was a memorable trip for me, because it was my first time in that community. I can remember as we went into the school and I talked to many of the kids there that day and they talked about a day in the life of some of the schoolchildren in Makkovik.

That night we had a public meeting. There were about eighty people who came out to the public meeting, but while we were getting ready to go to the meeting I can remember at the place where I was staying I got a phone call. It was someone who I had met earlier that day at some of the places that we had been visiting. The lady called me up and she said: What are doing in our community? I said: I am up here with my colleague, the MHA for Torngat Mountains. She said: You know, politicians only show up when there is a problem and you think you can fix it. So I said to the lady: Ma'am, this is my first time to your community. I came to visit; I came to talk to the people in your community.

I say all this because I want to make the point about the challenges and how unique Labrador really is. So she said to me: You only show up here because you think you can fix something. You come from the south to fix a northern problem. You come from the south to fix a problem that is in the north. I have always remembered that.

So the story went on, as I continued to talk to her, I said, in the next few weeks I will be standing in the House of Assembly and we are going to be telling a lot of stories about the tragic event that occurred in your community



over the last few weeks, the loss of young Burton Winters, the search and rescue and so on. We were all here through all of that. Many people in this House today sat through that.

I said, I think it would be very unfair of me to be talking about you and talking about your community without being here. That is the reason why I am here. She said, no one has ever said that to us before. She said, what are you doing tonight? I told her where I was going and she came out. I will always remember that. We cannot recreate, we cannot walk in other people's shoes. You have to be there to try and experience that. Labrador is kind of like that for me. I will always remember that story and I have made trips back there since then. It has really kind of grown on me to some degree.

So it is important for me on Monday, when we set aside the amendments that we outlined to the media and to the people in the Province, that to carve out and protect the seat in Labrador was important to us. I am certainly hoping that before this week is done that those seats will be carved out for Labrador, just like they were in the mid-1990s and just like it was in 1979.

Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves here today talking about what a new Legislature will be, and in this particular case to reduce ten seats or whatever the final analysis, whatever the final number will be, there will be a significant change in the number of MHAs and the way they work in this Province.

My colleague here from Bay of Islands, and my colleague from The Isles of Notre Dame made mention of this. In the district that I represent, Humber Valley, there is a community there, it is Pasadena. Many people in this room are familiar with it. In 2007, that community was one of the communities that was impacted by the boundary changes. Now Pasadena is one of the communities that I represent. I can remember in 2007 reading petitions into this House of Assembly. They did not want their community split down the middle. What we saw was one-third in the District of Humber East, and two-thirds would be in the District of Humber Valley.

Mr. Speaker, over the next few weeks and the next couple of months we will hear a lot of

stories about that. As this commission goes about their work speaking to people, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across the Province, there will be many stories of people who will be reluctant to change. Mr. Speaker, I am committed, and I know my party and my colleagues are committed. We believe that with the work the commissioners will do, we want to give them a fair chance to succeed in all this, and I believe they will.

The 120-day timeline that has been outlined here – a lot of people have said and when I looked at the reviews that have happened in other provinces, I have laid it out there, too, that I would be skeptical. There is nowhere, when you look at the reviews that have been done across the country, it will show you, where this kind of review has been done within 120 days, but we have to try it. Nowhere will you find that this kind of comprehensive review has been done within an election year.

In a few short months Elections NL will be tasked with pulling off an election in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is important for us, because there will be a lot of people watching our Province, to make sure this gets done right. The importance of making sure the election is done right – because there are people who will look at Newfoundland and Labrador, they want to see stability, so it is important.

I will tell you this, if the election goes wrong, lots of people will be noticing. It is important for us that this process gets done within the 120-day timeline, and then Elections NL and all the good people there who are responsible for that will be given the appropriate and the right amount of time to make that election work in 2015. Mr. Speaker, that is what we are working towards. That is what we believe in. What we find right now is we find ourselves with all parties agreeing to the reduction in seats. It is important now that we give the commission the opportunity to get their work done.

One of the other things I talked about on Monday is the flexibility of the commission. They have some flexibility as they kind of draw out that map. Like most Members of this House of Assembly, I too have seen many of those maps. Those maps have been flying around everywhere from people we do not even know

and probably from people who have never set foot in Newfoundland and Labrador, I would say, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we could expect a lot more than that in the next few days.

All of us will be watching to see which communities will be added to our districts. We will be also watching to see which communities we lose. Not only will we lose the community itself, but there is a great relationship that as MHAs you actually develop with the people you represent, the communities that you drive into, and your little trap lines, as I call them, as you go through your communities, as you weave in and out.

Lots of times as you drop in on some of your constituents – we have all done this – you will get those raisin buns at one place and there is a coffee you can count on, or a cup of tea or something that you can count on somewhere else. These are the kinds of very unique relationships that MHAs build up with their constituents. Some of them will be new faces, but, Mr. Speaker, that is what happens because every ten years by law in our Province right now, this is a process that we go through.

As the commission begins its work, it is important for me, and one of my objectives coming out of this debate is they be given a fair opportunity to get the work completed, to get it completed on time, to get it done accurately, and to get it done so that Elections NL are given the opportunity to pull off the election that we all want in the fall of this year, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Before I move on, Mr. Speaker, someone talked about the land mass. I want to go back to the Labrador piece again just for a few minutes. People talk about the land mass of Labrador. I was reading an article just this week, 269,000 square kilometres, the Island portion being 109 square kilometres. When you think about it – I extended that and I said let's overlay that into the Maritimes. I think the Maritimes turned out to be 113 square kilometres. Labrador is a big part of our Province. It is a big, big land mass, and from one community to the next community it is not always easy for people to travel around.

I see the MHA here for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. I have been through her district many times and there is a long drive down there too, I

would say, Mr. Speaker. So all of us, we have unique experiences within our own districts.

What a lot of people do not know, in the District of Humber Valley there is a community called Harbour Deep, which is still part of my community and still has two people who actually live there. I will tell you, I have not really had a sign on their lawn in either one of the last two elections, but we keep in contact. They are great supporters, I say to the Deputy Premier; yet these are the unique challenges we have to deal with from time to time from people who live in our districts.

One of the catalysts for making this decision tonight is the current – a lot of members have talked about it – fiscal challenges we face in our Province and what is happening with the global economy and oil. All of these are factors, and I agree that if we can find a way to save money, still do the right job, still do it efficiently, it is important to do that.

When we make the decision on Labrador and, by default, when you say the catalyst is a financial one, I want to put it in perspective. Our Province right now spends almost \$900,000 per hour. At Muskrat Falls right now, the largest project in the history of the Province in Labrador, we are spending almost \$140,000 per hour. The savings for that one Labrador seat was \$250,000 for the year. I just want to put that in context when we make this decision, even though \$250,000 is a lot of money, I want to put it in context of the decision that we are making here today.

Mr. Speaker, I will not take up too much more time, but I want to say thanks to my colleagues who have done a great job here today as they were involved in the debate, on both sides of the House, and to the Third Party as well. I believe that we will be all served with a good process. I think we are all looking forward to encouraging people to do their part and have their say into the electoral maps and the new boundaries however they are shaped and redrawn over the next few months.

I would encourage MHAs as well to make sure that if they have concerns, to make sure that that gets involved; but more importantly, as my colleague for the District of Bay of Islands said,

make sure that we encourage the unity, we encourage community associations to stick together, because it is important.

We will hear in the next few weeks and months how people feel like they have become disconnected, disenfranchised with this whole process. In some ways, we will hear people talking about how they are even more upset with politicians; but, at the end of the day, I think we will see new boundaries and I think we will see more competitive elections. We can expect to see all that later this year. Mr. Speaker, more importantly, what I hope to see is that we will see a Legislature that is better functioning, we will see better use of committees, and we will see that the trust level of politicians will be raised and the confidence levels of politicians will be even more.

I believe that whatever the number turns out to be in the final analysis on all of this that if we are all united and we are committed to this process, we can see it work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure for me to rise tonight and speak to Bill 42, as we know, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act – a very important piece of legislation. I have certainly enjoyed the debate over the last couple of days, certainly again tonight. The Member for Humber Valley spoke, the member for straits –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Isles of Notre Dame.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** The Isles of Notre Dame. There you go, I enjoyed that one as well; that was pretty good.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly always a pleasure to get to stand in the House of Assembly and represent the fine people of Ferryland district.

That district, the electoral boundaries now stretch from Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove, parts of Goulds, parts of the City of St. John's, on down south and around the Southern Avalon to the small community of St. Shotts. It certainly brings a variety and distinct culture as well, an identity, as we talked about earlier this evening of many other parts of the Province.

It is an area that was settled many years ago by the Irish, and there is a strong Irish connection. As we know, it is referred to as The Irish Loop. It has a strong connection overseas, certainly, to the UK, Scotland, and Ireland as well. If we go back and look at the district I think, historically, the name Ferryland is representing a district that dates back to the mid-1850s. Actually, 1832 is the date it was named. So it is probably one of the oldest named districts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We talked about electoral boundaries. When I first had the privilege of being elected in a by-election of 2007, at that time prior to that in 2006 the electoral boundaries review had taken place. At that time my district stretched from Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove to Trepassey. I went back to the polls in October of that year, 2011, because of the set dates that our government have brought in in regard to elections every four years, went to the polls again that October, and because of that – the electoral boundaries had changed, and as the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's had said, I picked up the community of St. Shotts.

So, through this process and as has been mentioned already, and certainly tonight, we will see actual change in electoral boundaries. That is part of the process. In that, we will readjust. Certainly as has been said, we will pick up areas, maybe drop others; but, at the end of the day, it is about democracy and it is about representing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in whatever region of this great Province you are, and whatever great region of the Province you certainly have the privilege to stand in this House and be elected by the people to speak for them in this House. It is a privilege to do so.

There has been a lot of talk about the discussion in regard to the ten-year legislative review. It is part of a legislative process that is in the law of

the Province. As I said, ten years ago, 2016 was the intended review in regard to the statute. This government, the Premier, in looking at where we are – I know in my district over the past number of years people have talked about the number of MHAs, have talked about the size of the Assembly, and talked about our population overall in the Province.

We reference and talk about as well in other jurisdictions and look at the ratio to the population and the number of elected representatives. When we look at all of that, I think it is well served at this point. I congratulate the Premier on that in moving this forward and the support of folks on the other side of the House as well to collectively looking at it. It is time.

It is not a new process. The Electoral Boundaries Act and legislation exists. There are dates to do it every ten years. This is taking the initiative to move that up recognizing that there is an opportunity to do it now, that collectively we can do this, move it up, follow the guidelines and the parameters, and to do a review as has been defined in the legislation. In regard to the commissioners, they will have a chance during those 120 days to go out and hear from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in regard to their desires, their concerns, and what they believe needs to be done in terms of various boundaries and the democracy of our Province. It gives them first and foremost an opportunity to participate. That is extremely important.

We represent them. We go to them and ask them for their support in representing them here in this House. As we go through this electoral boundaries process, it is crucial that they be heard from. Through that, the commissioners will accumulate all that information and then come back with recommendations, which again will come back to this House. It will be voted on by the members in this Legislature as we move forward.

In doing that, it is all about making sure that the representation of the Province is met and best according to how we have talked about the geography of the Province, the culture, the nature of who we are, and how that is reflected in our representation as well. That will all be done through this process that we go through

when the committee is struck. It is very open, very transparent, and everybody has an opportunity to participate. Within that we will take those recommendations. Through this House, we will redefine the electoral boundaries and do what we need to do in the requirements of the legislation.

Again, I say, it is about democracy. It is about doing this process every ten years. We have moved it up. As a Province and looking where we are, it is also looking at what do we need in terms of our population and the size of the Province. Comparatively, we look at other jurisdictions and what they have in terms of numbers and representation. I think everybody agrees, it is time to scale it back, put it in perspective, and in doing that, it saves us some money which is so important; \$10 million. As we look forward, we will redefine our boundaries. That will serve us well moving forward.

We have the members in the House here. It has been referenced already tonight in regard to the effect it is going to have and the changes to all of us. Right now, we have twenty-nine in our group. All of us will see the implications of the changes. In some cases there will be significant redefining of the boundaries. That will cause instances where various districts adjacent to one another could be changed dramatically and some could be changed not as much. Either way, from our perspective, we recognize there are twenty-nine of us here. We will certainly see the effects of that.

That is about the leadership of our Premier and leader to recognize this is important to do. In doing that, we all understand there could be changes in all of our districts and it could affect us when we go back to the polls. That is what leadership is all about, standing up and making those changes. Looking forward for our Province on what we need to do to continue to recognize who we are as a Province, and follow through on this action as we need to do with this legislation.

As I said before, in regard to how the committee will be struck, the chief justice of Newfoundland and Labrador of the Supreme Court will appoint a Supreme Court judge. From there, there will be four individuals who will sit on the

commission and hear from the residents of the Province on what is important to them as we look forward to realigning the electoral boundaries.

The overall principle here, obviously, is the vote of every elector in the Province having an opportunity to have an equal vote as an elector. That is so important because that is fundamental to our democracy, that everybody has a vote. Then we will go through looking at the population overall, the amount of seats, and what that quotient will be as they go forward and look at the work. Then they will look at a twenty-five variance depending in the Province where they are.

Those are the types of things they will look at as they go through to make sure that it duly reflects and takes in recognition of all those variables we talked about, whether it is culture, geography, or transportation concerns. It could be communications. All of those things are reflective as the commission looks at the work and over those 120 days will come back with those recommendations.

We talked about in prior years in terms of the length of time maybe to do it and those types of things. We all know every ten years there are huge jumps in terms of technology and the ability to complete this type of work. We are confident that within those 120 days this can be accomplished. Then the Chief Electoral Office of Newfoundland and Labrador can carry through and do the work we need to do to carry us into an election in 2015 in the fall, which is consistent with our current legislation under the Elections Act for defined dates in regard to going to the polls.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a fundamental process in terms of every ten years reviewing the legislation. It is important to us and all Members of the House of Assembly with regard to moving this forward and recognizing what we need to do. I congratulate everybody who has spoken on this. It was joining collectively. I hope, as we move forward through the night, to make sure that we can conclude this process with regard to the legislation, and that as quickly as possible we can get moving towards striking the committee and making sure the committee can get out and start doing the work so that we

can move forward, get this done, get it completed, get it back to the House, full disclosure. Come back to the people's house with regard to what is done, and then with all good intent we can get to that election in the fall of this year.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have a lot more to add. I think it has been very good in certain terms of discussions in what we have had. It has been broad based and certainly it has been very good in terms of everybody's discussion here. I want to congratulate those who have participated in the debate. We certainly look forward to moving this forward in the days ahead.

As the Member for Ferryland, I support Bill 42. I recognize again, as I said before, the leadership of the Premier to drive this, to move it forward. It is in the best interest of the Province that we move it forward. As I said, those are heard in Newfoundland and Labrador from around the Province through the commission, through the work they will do. They will be heard and have an opportunity to participate, and tell the commission what they think in regard to our Province and how we are moving forward.

The Province has changed over the past ten years from the last time it was done. In terms of population and that population from rural to urban, all those, oftentimes we see changes. That will be reflected no doubt in the recommendations that we see coming back.

That is all part of it, the holistic approach, looking at what we are doing and how we do it. It will serve us well. At the end of day, as I said when I started, it is all about democracy; it is all about being here and representing the people of the Province and to be fortunate. We are fortunate.

Sometimes you might get some tough knocks in politics and some people often are scared away from elected office. I think it is important that we always continue to encourage people to get involved in elected office because that is what is so fundamental to who we are as a people and to democracy. We need people to come, especially our youth, to make sure they are involved and encouraged to be involved in politics because it is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly be supporting Bill 42. I congratulate all those on their involvement in the discussions.

I thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. You have punched a lot of hours today. It is good to see the Speaker of the House of Assembly earning his keep and working hard on behalf of the Legislature and the people of the Province. It is very good to see. It is not an easy role, especially when you have long days and nights in the House of Assembly. The presiding officers and the Table Officers have to work quite hard and pay close attention to the debate as it unfolds in the Legislature.

I understand that one of our Pages celebrated a birthday since we have been sitting today. I want to take this opportunity to say happy twenty-fifth birthday to one of our Pages who is celebrating with us.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Unfortunately, there is no cake. I would go cut you a piece if there was some, but we do not even have donuts. I cannot speak for the Opposition Parties, but our rations are running low. We might have to collaborate at some point before the sun rises.

On a more serious note, it is a great pleasure to rise in this House of Assembly tonight to participate in a very important debate on Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act. It is actually a very short piece of legislation. The Explanatory Notes indicate that the bill will do three things really, fundamentally. It will amend the Electoral Boundaries Act, which I will speak about in a moment, to “require the electoral boundaries commission to report upon the delimitation of the province into districts in 2015; reduce the number of one-member districts in the province to 38; and make

consequential amendments for the purpose of a commission report in 2015.”

So that is why we are here. That is the piece of legislation we are debating. I will explain why I feel it is important for members to have their say. I have been really pleased through the course of the debate over the past number of hours to see virtually every Member of the House of Assembly take an active role in participating, and I am glad now to have a chance myself to contribute to the discussion.

I am the MHA for Mount Pearl North, not South, and there is often confusion. In fact, just this week as this debate unfolded, I was attending an event that took place in my district, and my colleague from across the House, the MHA for Mount Pearl South was in attendance as well. When I put my name tag on at the event – when I walked in the name tags were already prepared – it read Steve Kent, MHA, Mount Pearl South. So when I stood at the podium, I assured my colleague that it was not some kind of conspiracy, there was not an elaborate plot. Boundaries in Mount Pearl have not changed at this point, and I really hope I will be running in a district that resembles the current District of Mount Pearl North.

Along those lines, I am actually the first MHA for Mount Pearl North. I was elected in 2007 following a review of boundaries and a change that occurred to boundaries. The majority of my district was formerly part of the District of Waterford Valley, which was represented for a long time by Harvey Hodder, a former Speaker of this House.

A member opposite is indicating it is a beautiful district, and it is. I understand he has sleepovers in my district from time to time, and he is welcome in my district any time. I do not encourage him to stay for too long, but he is welcome to visit any time.

The former District of Waterford Valley, prior to the boundary changes, actually took in a good chunk of Mount Pearl, the older, more historic part of Mount Pearl which I still represent, and it actually took in part of St. John’s at the time. It evolved over the years. At one point it took in a chunk of Cowan Heights. Last going off I believe the District of Waterford Valley took in

– I think it was something like only a handful of houses in the City of St. John’s. Now I am proud to represent both the Town of Paradise and the City of Mount Pearl.

Mount Pearl now has three MHAs. As a result of the last round of boundary changes we have now three MHAs as opposed to two, what we traditionally had. The Town of Paradise is in a similar circumstance, with three MHAs representing the town.

The debate that has unfolded since we have been in the House this week has been a sensible one. I am pleased that there has been lots of time given for members to have their say and to express their views on legislation that really does affect all of us, as has been said a number of times tonight. It really is an exercise in democracy. I think the positive outcome that will come from all of this is a smaller Legislature that still has good representation for people from all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to applaud the Premier’s leadership in identifying the need to reduce the seats in the House of Assembly. I know it is something that is supported by both Opposition parties as well. We can have a healthy discussion around the details and around the specifics of the timing and the approach and so on, but we all seem to have acknowledged the need for some reform.

The reform that needs to occur in this House of Assembly has to be more than about the number of seats. We have to look at how our parliamentary system does business. We do need to look at our Committee structures and how they are utilized. We do have to look at how Members of the House of Assembly are engaged in the process. I am glad to see movement on this issue. I look forward to seeing further initiatives in which the Premier has alluded to, to move democracy forward in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am really happy we are taking action now as opposed to waiting several years. If we were not making some of these changes to the legislation, the next changes to boundaries would likely occur five years from now. I am glad that we are moving and that some progress will likely be

made as a result of this debate that is taking place tonight.

It is not just about the decisions that we make as Members of the House of Assembly. This is a process that beyond passing the legislation –

**MR. O’BRIEN:** (Inaudible).

**MR. KENT:** Can you call for some order please, Mr. Speaker, and protect me from the Member for Gander? I would appreciate it. Even some of the most rambunctious members of the House are behaving themselves tonight.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the minister to be relevant to the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate your wisdom and I certainly have great respect for your ruling. I once again ask for your protection.

As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, it is not just about the decisions we are going to make, and they are very important decisions that we are going to make as part of this process. It is really important for citizens to take an active interest in what happens beyond Bill 42.

There is a commission I am going to talk about – if I have time left – that is going to embark on a process that will encourage citizen participation. I hope that individuals will get involved, I hope that communities will get involved and have their say just as we did, not that many years ago, in 2006. I will speak about that in a moment as well.

We have talked a number of times through this debate, both inside and outside the House, about saving money. It is important to consider the cost implications of the decisions that we make in terms of this bill. Rightsizing the Legislature will save us some money. I think that is the responsible thing to do.

When you look at the population of our Province and you look at the other provinces of Canada

and how big their Legislatures are and you look at representation per capita, our Assembly is relatively large. I have no doubt that the people of the Province have been served well by the Legislature but it is time to modernize this structure, a structure that is a very historic one, and come up with a Legislature that is the right size for our Province today and into the future.

There have been several references in this debate to the 2006 process. Several members opposite have alluded to the fact that I participated in a process at the time. I know over the years there are numerous Members of the House of Assembly who have taken part.

I was the Mayor of Mount Pearl in 2006. We did make representation to express views and concerns on behalf of the citizens we represented municipally, because we were concerned about ensuring that our city would continue to have adequate representation and strong representation in the House of Assembly.

As this process unfolds, I hope that communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, large and small, will share their views on how they wish to be represented and how their citizens wish to be represented in this Legislature. I hope communities will take part.

As a result of the 2006 process, which led to boundary changes in 2007, just the very next year, Mount Pearl gained an MHA. That MHA is the MHA for Topsail, our Premier, who now represents a small portion of the City of Mount Pearl.

As I said in the beginning, we are talking about several amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act. What that act does is it puts a mechanism in place to review and amend electoral boundaries. It allows for a commission to be appointed every ten years. Under the current act, the way it is worded currently, the next commission will be appointed in 2016. It is very prescriptive around the number of districts. It will be divided into forty-eight one-member districts.

The commission will have a chairperson. That chairperson will be appointed by the chief justice of Newfoundland and Labrador. It will be someone who is either a judge of the

Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal or the Trial Division in our Province. There will be four other members of this commission who will be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Assembly. That is you, Mr. Speaker. That is an approach that has served us well in the past and it is an approach that I think can work well as we embark on this process at this point in time.

The commission will be required to submit a report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. The minister then has to immediately submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The minister also has to table the report in the House of Assembly within fifteen days of submitting it to the Lieutenant Governor in Council if the House of Assembly is sitting.

**MS SULLIVAN:** What about if it is not?

**MR. KENT:** That is a good question. One of our members just inquired about what happens if the House of Assembly is not sitting at that time. Well, then the report has to be submitted within fifteen days after the beginning of the next session of the House of Assembly if the House is not sitting at the time the report is received.

**MS SULLIVAN:** You are a wealth of information.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you.

It is refreshing to see that at 2:30 in the morning members of the House are taking such an active interest in the process and the debate. I applaud you all on all sides of the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. KENT:** Back to the point I was making, Mr. Speaker. The heckling is rather distracting as I am sure you can appreciate.

In 2006, the commission was specifically instructed at that time to have four districts in Labrador. While that is not what is proposed in the current Bill 42, I am really pleased to hear the debate that has unfolded here in the House of Assembly this week. It is great to see members on both sides of the House standing and advocating for the constituents they represent.



Labrador does have some unique needs, challenges, opportunities, a unique geography, unique culture, and unique communities. I think the move to amend this legislation to preserve four seats in Labrador is a really positive one. I want to commend members on both sides of the House for making the case. Specifically tonight I would like to congratulate the Member for Labrador West and the Member for Lake Melville for very articulate, passionate, and informed participation in the debate.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** In terms of the amendments that are proposed in this bill, Mr. Speaker, this bill makes some amendments that are very specific to what is going to happen this year in 2015. This is not unlike what has occurred in the past.

Just as an example, to ensure that the commission can get to work right away and get its work started as soon as possible, the Speaker of the House will be required to appoint the four remaining members of the commission within five days of the chairperson being appointed by the chief justice. Don't plan any vacations, Mr. Speaker. Things will move quickly and that will be good for the process, it will be good for democracy.

I do believe that the time frames are achievable. I know there has been considerable discussion about that. Lots of thought and research has gone into this. I think if we all work together we can ensure that the time frames get met because we do need to have a general election in 2015. We want to have a general election in 2015 and I know that all members of the House agree on that as well.

Census figures will be available. The 2015 commission will use the latest census figures that are available. It has come up that there is a census taking place in 2016. I acknowledge that but the data from that census will not be available in 2016. I presume it will be available at some point in 2017. Then, we are back to talking about waiting five years from now to see changes to our boundaries. If we are all in agreement that there is a need for change, there is no time like the present to bring about that change.

I am really happy that members of the House are here working through this process which will result in changes to boundaries for this general election that is coming up later this year. It is an ambitious time frame. There is a lot of work to be done, but we have clear framework in place that we can follow in order to bring about the changes that are needed and get the work done.

The most recent census figures will be used by the 2015 commission. The 2015 commission is also going to be required to provide its report within 120 days. That has been discussed numerous times during this debate. I am not a Finance Minister and I am certainly not a mathematician, but I can confirm that is about four months. After the appointment of a chairperson the commission has 120 days to get its report in.

There are also a number of amendments in this bill that will apply beyond 2015. It has been mentioned several times throughout the debate that the next commission would then commence its work in 2026 and every ten years thereafter.

Of course, future sessions of the House could result in other changes to the act. That has happened in the past. It is quite reasonable to expect that the House will contemplate changes in the future. The intention is that there will be a commission every ten years or so to do this work. Things change, demographics change, the population of our Province changes, and where people live in our Province changes, so it is important to review the boundaries and make sure they still ensure the best possible representation for the people of the Province.

What is proposed for 2026 and beyond is that the commission would commence its work as soon as is convenient after March 31 and report by the end of the calendar year. That is what is currently set out in the act, Mr. Speaker. Reports would continue to be tabled in the House of Assembly within fifteen days of receipt, or within fifteen days after the next session of the House opens.

This is a process that makes sense. It is a process that has served us well in the past. I think there are great advantages to getting going early with this, to making the amendments that are required to allow us to make the changes

now rather than wait another four or five years. Let's get on with it.

I know there is a desire on the part of Members of the House of Assembly on both sides to rightsize the House, to make it smaller, and to bring about other improvements and changes to our process in this House of Assembly. I look forward to debates about that as well.

We can do better. We can better utilize our committee structure. We can make sure that all MHAs are actively engaged in the process. There are a number of other things we can do to modernize the historic democratic practice that happens on the floor of this House of Assembly.

It is quite late or quite early depending on your perspective. I want to thank members for their attention. I want to thank all members for participating in this debate. I am certainly happy to have had a chance to rise and speak in support of Bill 42. I look forward to the discussion that is going to occur when we get to the Committee stage of debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. CROSS:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

It seems so long since we came here, but I guess what is important and always important is that if we have something to say we should bring it to the table, on the table. We should also think that there are forty-eight of us currently sitting in this House and if we all bring a unique opinion and we can have one distinct point of view each time we speak that is different than what anybody else speaks, then we would have forty-eight new ideas on every bill or every idea that comes here.

It is always great to stand and speak. Like many of colleagues, I say it is an honour to represent and speak on behalf of the people of Bonavista North. I cannot profess to speak for all of my constituents if I say that everybody in Bonavista North supported this piece of legislation, because as in most of our districts, we are still divided in lots of ways by party lines. So there

are three opinions in every single district. I guess in the last general election the opinion that brought me to this location was the strongest opinion. That does not say that all opinions are not valid and are not welcome.

From the time I was elected, as all members in this hon. House, as soon as you walk back into your district, you are the member for the district. You are just not a member for the people of the Conservatives or the NDP or the Liberals. You are the member for the entire district.

In a debate such as this, Bill 42, we talk about reduction in the size of this House and the mechanism that gets us there. We know and we always say: Well, how is this going to impact me? How am I going to be impacted? Most of the people in our districts say the same thing, how is our district impacted?

It is not just am I going to pick up a few votes or a few people or constituents to the north, the south, the west or the east, but ten of our districts just will not exist, or eight of our districts will not exist in the next general election. That means there is some stark reality for all of us here and it is the reason why we all put extended effort or thought into the comments that we make to bring towards this, because we have to make the right decision, the right fit at the right time.

For people who might have just tuned in, you woke up with indigestion or you have been there since 5:00 o'clock this afternoon, what are we doing here at 2:30 in the morning in the House of Assembly? We are still talking about the changes the 2015 amendment for Bill 42 is going to make.

There are five real changes that will be impacted with this bill. First, the original legislative review document, the legislation currently requires us to meet in 2016 to appoint a commission, to review our districts, the size of them, the number of them, and we have, through the bold leadership of the Premier at this point – sometimes, as my grandfather would say, you have to take the bull by the horns and you attack a problem to find a solution. In this case, the bold move was to move up the reduction in the number of members in the House of Assembly by one calendar year.

Maybe the only unique point I might bring to this debate, that I have not heard yet, is that 2016 was a cycle of ten years. We have all talked about ten years; that we would come together and have this commission and the Legislature would be reviewed, but we do not operate in ten-year cycles in the Legislature. We end up operating in four-year cycles. Every time this ten year legislation rolls around, if you do your multiplier effects, you are going to end up – every four or five times in the cycle it is going to happen in an election year.

Maybe one thing the commission has to think about, or the legislation has to be adjusted for the future, is that really it needs to fit the cycle of four year elections. It is either done every eight years or every twelve years, but it fits in neatly in the package between two election years such that you are not – like next year, there would have been a review in 2016. All the members who might have been reduced, as we are saying, would have been here redundant for three years, feeling that at the end of three years my district either does not exist, or you have to convince your neighbour not to run so that three years later you have a district to run in. If you keep the cycle going in either an eight-year or a twelve-year cycle, it fits in between two elections and you do not have that type of effect.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROSS:** The Member for Terra Nova is challenging me already before the next nomination process.

Second, we are required to subdivide the Province into a required number of districts. In this legislation we are stipulating a required number. That is good leadership as well, because if we are looking at the time it is going to take for this commission to meet and to talk about the number of potential districts, if they had to go through four or five scenarios, every scenario would have taken extra time to figure out. In the 120 day process, by giving a distinct number it means you are focusing in on a number from the beginning and you stand a much more real chance of meeting that target.

If you have a range and the commission has to talk about all the scenarios to make up say forty, forty-two, forty-four, then after all the

deliberations they have to stop and start again and go into different-sized numbers, and then they have to come up with the real number that they would like to bring back as their recommendation. So that takes more time. By focusing this much for the commission, it means they do not have to spend so much of their time trying to divide or to come to some decisiveness about what the right number would be.

I am just reviewing my notes, Mr. Speaker, but –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Start over again.

**MR. CROSS:** Start over again?

The other thought that you think about in the sense of what the physical makeup of this place is, and my seatmate here and I earlier tonight sort of looked around. If you look at the reconfiguration of what this looks like, just to give a picture for the members in the House, and the people at home probably would not have this realization; but if you look at the two pods of seats that are here or six, and then there are two, and two more over there, potentially the original idea of reducing ten seats – these four pods of seats would not be needed in the next Assembly. There will be lots of room for extra furniture.

We did talk about the idea of the fiscal challenges we have now. If you look at the \$10 million that we would expect over the next four years to save by the life of this, in that four years as well we also save forty vested pensionable years. Forty vested pensionable years is approximately five pensioned salaries of a normal two-term MHA. The other savings that comes in this is the amount of pension that five pensioned two-term MHAs would make for the rest of their lives. It is also a saving in this if you look at just the pure dollars. It is hard to be exact on numbers like this.

The first instance that we had we talked about how the cuts will be, you wonder what the impact would be on your district, but no one member can answer this question. If I had to ask any of the members here around this House what impact is it going to have on my district, not one of us can say because not one of us will have a say. That is the important thing about this independent commission.

Just for people in the general populous and for the people who are looking at us tonight, or are going to review this from the Web cast tomorrow, we will not have a say. One of the clauses there I think the Member for Labrador West alluded to earlier tonight. I thought I had two original points, but he took one of them. He referred to the fact that no elected member, no Senator could be on the commission. Neither can a Premier.

At this point no one can impact the deliberations of that independent commission. The results of what they bring back in the configuration of the districts and the seats means that it will be truly independent. That is very important as well.

I am trying to piece through my notes, the few notes I did have. I do not really want to repeat what most others have said. Some things have been said as we go through. I talked about the cycle of ten and twelve years.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Tell us again.

**MR. CROSS:** Tell us again. Just think about how this changes and probably the impact that seat reconfiguration has had over many seasons. Some people have talked about their seats as being the first, like Member for Mount Pearl North because it was a reconfiguration that created that seat from another district or as districts were expanded. Traditionally, I just want to let everyone know a little bit about Bonavista North and how seat configurations changed Bonavista North over the years.

Just for my friend from Terra Nova District, in the 1960s and 1970s Bonavista North started at the northern extremity of Cape Freels, but it included your district as far as Traytown. Originally or historically Traytown, Glovertown, Gambo, Hare Bay, Dover were in Bonavista North. I am not sure if we are going to have them back or what, as the reconfiguration comes.

In the 1970s and 1980s Gambo, Hare Bay, and Dover were a part of the district. Believe it or not, two of us standing in the House – some have a long history in the House. I am a new rookie MHA but the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South and myself were

candidates in 1989. In 1989 Gambo, Hare Bay, and Dover were in Bonavista North.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible)

**MR. CROSS:** Yes, I ran in 1989 as a young fellow younger than you today. I went as far as Cape Freels.

Today, in the 1990s the reconfigurations took the look of the district and elongated it, took it right down into Gander Bay which everybody says, how are they a part of Bonavista North? It is Bonavista Bay North and going further north. It goes around the Straight Shore and into Gander Bay.

In the reconfigurations in 2006 Rodgers Cove and Victoria Cove, the farthest two communities, were carved off. I believe the Speaker's district has them now. The Member for Bay of Islands spoke earlier about people having a fear as part of your district gets carved off. There were some conversations then about Rodgers Cove and Victoria Cove leaving the local service district of Gander Bay North and being represented by a new member, but they were quite happy to have the one they have, I do believe that, a good member.

I would ask all hon. members just to think for a minute – I am going to wind down now. This time next year what will this House look like? One year from now this review will be done, as we are going to assist as much as we can in the configuration procedure to be complete. As everybody wants, the new election will have taken place. No one has the magical crystal ball to figure out what is going to happen in that.

I would just like to say congratulations to all of my current colleagues who will be in that new House of Assembly which will be in place next year. Some others of us will probably decide to retire or not to run, but we are all confident that the Legislature will be effective, and it will be lean and mean. The MHAs who are selected will make the House and every House evolves in its own way.

A little earlier when I thought my words might have had a little more importance I wanted to refer to a little quote from Shakespeare. We talk about doing things at the right time, the correct

time. We talk about how members on both sides of the House understand that this is a move that needs to be made. This is a little quote, I believe it is from *Macbeth*. The quote says, "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well. It were done quickly". We do not put off to do a good thing on the right time at the right place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to stand in this hon. House and speak to Bill 42. Normally around 3:00 in the morning I am checking the weather forecast, I am getting ready to phone the operations for the ferry terminal tapes to see what ferries are running. Very seldom am I in a really good mood, depending on the weather and the ferry service, but, Mr. Speaker, we are on the right path to solving all that. Along with solving all that, we are on the right path with solving reform to the House of Assembly. It is a very important piece of legislation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, before I talk to that, I want to note a few things. I missed the first two days of debate. I was in Halifax with my Atlantic colleagues trying to work on improving our infrastructure here when it comes around transportation. I did get back for Private Members' Day.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to be part of a historic debate and discussion for particularly a historic agreement in setting up an all-party committee to look at mental health and address the issues around that important piece of health care that we need to implement.

I would like to say to the Member for St. John's Centre, honestly, bravo, because that is part of history and I am glad to be part of that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** I know everybody in this House was, to be part of that process.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago it was the fourth time I said to a Premier: Are you serious? I said it to our Premier when he had first brought up the point about reforming the House and getting to where people had talked about getting.

I said are you serious, to three other former Premiers on issues that I did not agree with. That is democracy, and we went from there. On this one I said again, are you serious, because like everybody, I was very apprehensive. When you are talking about something as open, as new, and as bold as reforming the House of Assembly, particularly when you are discussing six, eight, ten members of the House no longer existing within a year, Mr. Speaker, it brings some apprehension and you want some clarification.

After we spent a few hours discussing where things were going, the process, why this was important to the people of this Province, it brought me back to a political science course I had done almost thirty-five years ago in university. It was called Political Structure. The professor at the time was making a statement. I never quite got it at the time, or I did not pay attention. It was the early 1980s. There are probably other reasons why I could not understand what was being talked about at the time, but we will not get into that.

What he had said to the class was: democracy thrives when elected leaders do things that do not seem democratic. I never quite got it until I started to analyze exactly where we were going with this, and then it really hit me at the end of the day. It hit me over the last couple of days listening to the debate here.

Real democracy and real leadership is doing things that people do not think are democratic. There is no doubt there are people out in the general public who think what we are doing here now is not democratic because we are changing what they understand. We are changing the way they always voted. We are changing the scale of how they voted. The geographic makeup, they are comfortable. People are averse to change, but it shows real leadership when we come forward with something that is about changing

the existence of our own futures in some cases. It shows there is a really bold approach to it.

What I liked about our discussion too, Mr. Speaker, was we all sort of had that same open apprehension about how we get to this, and there were some example used. I say this tongue-in-cheek, but it did bring out a realization now when I think about it. Some of my members used Bell Island as an example, when we do carving out of where districts may go. People said what about Bell Island? Where would that go, for example? Of course, a lot of people said do not give it to me, I do not want it, leave it where it is. There are too many challenges around ferry services and that. Then it made me think that this is not new about changing boundaries, changing names of districts, changing who you represent, and the numbers you represent.

I just look back in my own district since I have been involved in politics as a young man. It was the District of Bell Island. I can remember as a young man putting up posters on poles. Then it was the District of Harbour Main – Bell Island, then it was the District of Mount Scio – Bell Island, then it was Cape St. Francis, and now it is Conception Bay East – Bell Island. This whole process is not new about change, about boundaries, of opening up exactly who represents who.

This case is probably a little bit bolder because it serves a number of purposes. It shows that we are open. We are taking a leadership role and the Premier has taken that role. It shows we are going to be fiscally responsible. It shows that as things have progressed in technology, in our infrastructure for people to be able to be mobile and get to what used to be really remote parts of this Province, we have eliminated a lot of that and we improved it.

Technology has been a great mainstay where we are now. It is only going to improve and improve. It makes the ability here to make a very large, vast Province a lot smaller. It makes the connection between people in various communities a lot easier to maintain and make that connection, Mr. Speaker. That is a very important component of where we are with it.

That is why the Premier wanted to bring it in and why we supported it, and as I see now from the discussion in this House, why everybody in this House supports the fact that we need a smaller Legislature. We need to be able to show to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that you can still be represented, that you are not going to lose that ability to have input in how we govern here, in what the policies are, in what the legislation that is passed in this House is all about.

It does not change the fact that when you cut up the pie financially with the same geographic set up, people will still get their equal share. That whole process is there. The fear for people now should be – at the end of the day we are doing something that is fiscally responsible. We are doing something that is modern, something in tune with other jurisdictions.

When I was in Halifax, I was sitting down with my colleagues and we were talking about some of our own infrastructure things. Then the conversation changed a little bit because their bosses, their Premiers, had been in Newfoundland and Labrador that same day meeting with our Premier. They had heard about what we were doing. One of the comments was: that is very bold. It is very out there. For someone to go to that extreme to go out and say we want to change the Legislature.

We want to put things in place and we want to do it now, but we want to do it with everybody's co-operation. We want to follow a process. We want it to be neutral. We want it to be open. We want it to be engaging and we want to have fair representation. That is the process we have proposed here. It is what the Premier has brought forward. That is what we have had a debate over for the last number of days. I would hope and think we are getting to a very close point of bringing this to a closure where people are comfortable with the process moving forward and we can get on with the work at hand.

I have talked to a number of my constituents, a number of people who are very politically astute, some who support our party, some who support other parties, and they all agree that where we are going is the right place. They may have some apprehension about the process we

use, the numbers, where we are going with this, but they all agree this is the time to do it, now. Do it before the next election. Be ready to do it, then whatever is implemented is on a go-forward basis from there on.

People know financially what you are saving. They know who their representation is. Geographically, we will all know what districts are going to be represented. Will it have an impact on some people in this House? No doubt. Will it have an impact on some other people who were going to put themselves forward to run for a certain district? No doubt it will. That is the evolution of politics, Mr. Speaker.

As I noted, in only a short period of time in my own district, five times there have been changes, five geographical changes, not just a name change. When you talk about at one point Mount Scio, part of my district, went in as far as the Marine Institute. It is a far cry from Bell Island to the Marine Institute from there. At one point people came from Bell Island, got off the ferry, and went through another district to get to the other part of the district in Cape St. Francis. There are times Bell Island went out to Harbour Main. There were three communities between there and where they were represented.

There is a good cross section there to understand where we are now is a better place in my opinion, to be able to carve out exactly the geographic locations that are more common to each other physically. Probably even some of the economic bases, some of the social nuances that are more comfortable with each other. Also, being very cognizant of the populous, you have to have that as part of it. There has to be a gauge when we go that route.

The discussion here talking about Labrador and the Big Land, we all realize the uniqueness up there; geographically, the size of the actual piece of land up there, but also the extra nuances up there, the cultural differences that are part of that. As a small populous, it is spread on a large area with all kinds of diverse backgrounds, all kinds of diverse needs and cultures. You have to be cognizant of that.

I am glad we have seen such a good debate here. I do not mind saying and I give credit to, no

doubt, the two members from Labrador on the other side. They were very passionate about it, but I can guarantee you from firsthand experience, the two members on this side in a caucus room and in a Cabinet room, how they spoke up about the importance of making sure Labrador was represented properly and making sure the open discussion was about that Labrador should have four seats. How do we get to that point? How do we carve that out? How do we make sure proper representation is there without alienating anybody else in Newfoundland and Labrador?

It is not about this. This is about being fair to all of our constituents, all the electorate in this Province and making sure when we do our district boundaries that they best represent the people in those particular areas to better govern and better represent how every economic part of this Province can be represented. Every part of our districts can benefit from the economic growth in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

When I did talk to my colleagues from the other provinces to get a better understanding if we were on the right track, if this was the right thing to do – was it in line with other jurisdictions? Did it make sense from a geographic point of view, from a cultural point of view, from a fiscal point of view, and from the number of seats in the Legislature? Were we too big, that we were not governed in the same way that we could be when it comes to debate in the House of Assembly? Were we going too small as part of that process?

Then, I looked at the numbers, Mr. Speaker. I looked at Nova Scotia, 950,000 people and fifty-one seats. It is a smaller land mass. When you look at that and you equate we are talking thirty-eight or forty seats, whatever may be carved out here, I am thinking then that looks like we are in tune with what Nova Scotia would be with its populous and its geography to be able to properly represent people.

I thought that fits well. We are on the same sightline as we would be with another one of our colleagues in Eastern Canada. Then, I looked at New Brunswick, forty-nine seats and 760,000 people. The same thing, I looked at their land mass, compared that and looked at the numbers. Thirty-eight to forty seats in Newfoundland and

Labrador would almost be directly in line with exactly where they are when it comes to representation for the populous. I said it works well.

Then, I went again to Saskatchewan – I just wanted to throw one out there out in Western Canada – fifty-eight seats and 1 million people. It is a massive land mass, almost three times the size of Newfoundland and Labrador. I looked at that and said what is proper representation? Their representation would be different than ours. Ours now would be well in line with what they are on the national averages when it comes to that.

With that being said, and looking at what some of my colleagues said about the timelines, about being able to do this, knowing where we are, knowing what we have to compare it to, knowing that we already have technology out there, knowing that we already have – well after our debate tonight, the next number of days, the next weeks, wherever it takes us we will be giving the direction to the commission to be able to take this and move it forward. Knowing that we are going to have very competent individuals to do that, and the resources to be able to do that, Mr. Speaker, is very important to us.

Mr. Speaker, as people said here before, democracy at times is very challenging. It has its own challenges. It sometimes can be frightening because you have to make some decisions that you hope are the right ones to guide people in the right direction and best represent them. To do that, you have to have great open dialogue.

That is the thing I have enjoyed here the last couple of days, listening to my colleagues across the floor, listening to my colleagues on this side passionately talk about what they feel are the important things when we look at Bill 42 here. How they feel it should be implemented. Why they feel it should be important for the people. What we need to be cognizant of if we are going to do this to make it work.

If we are going to be serious about making the House of Assembly smaller, but still properly represent the people of this Province, how do we do that? We can only do that by expressing our concerns, our experiences, some information we

have, some of our own affairs, some of the information we have heard from people, and some of the concerns they have. Put it all on the table and having those discussions so that we on this side can also take that into account. While we also put out why we think this is a good move, why this works, why it will still properly represent the people of this Province, we can also express to the Opposition what it is we are trying to achieve here.

I have noticed over the last couple of hours, I think we are getting very close to being on the same page, particularly with the majority of the people in this House. We are very close to being on the same page and the same page, as I see it, around a number of things: making sure the House of Assembly is smaller but functional, making sure that the land mass is carved out in such a way they represent people properly, and that there are minimal restrictions to people being able to travel if you are an elected official to parts of your district.

There is no doubt there are going to be challenges. As the Minister of Transportation, I know the challenges on our roads, our ferry services, and our airstrips getting people in there. I know that on a daily basis, so I do know that some MHAs are going to have more challenges travelling than others. That is why better use of technology and better ways of engaging citizens will help eliminate some of those issues and make sure everybody gets proper representation.

Another one of the things I think we have all come to an understanding on and we have all agreed to is Labrador having four seats. The importance of proper representation up there, the importance of acknowledging cultural needs, cultural diversities, and the importance of understanding geography does have an impact on how you can govern and more importantly, how you can engage people.

Having those four seats up there at least gives people an understanding that they have the proper representation. We are still going to use technology. We are still going to improve our transportation infrastructure. As the years go on the Big Land will have a better opportunity for citizens to be better and more engaged.



**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** That is very important to what we are doing here. It is very important to what the Premier outlined when he talked about his bold initiative, this change. It was about better representation.

Sometimes bigger is not always better. In this case we are going on the backwards swing on that. We are saying smaller can be better because we are going to think this through and we are going to have this open dialogue. Like the all-party committee we set up, this is an all-party debate. We have had a very open debate here. We will then have an all-party commission that will look at how we better move this forward. We will have an open dialogue – how we get information in so people understand exactly what it is we are proposing and they can have input to make sure that what we do is done right. The Premier said that.

We only have one opportunity to do this right. The best way to do that is to engage everybody who has input to that and has a stake in it. The first stakeholders are in this room. The majority of the stakeholders then are outside. How we engage them is going to be very important. We know that will be a major job of the commission and the resources they have.

The way we can do it and the way we can start that process is what started this House over the last couple of days; co-operation, understanding, and trying to sell the message to everybody that this is about better governance, it is about fiscal responsibility, and fiscal governance. It is about finding a way to make sure that this Province is in line with other provinces, but more importantly finds the way to be able to represent the people who are in this great Province who elect us here.

It shows that the reality is here. We are going to follow some financial challenges over the next year, two, three, four. It depends on where our economy goes over the next period of time. We have to lead by examples. We have done that other times here; we have to do the same here. When you are leading by example you are not cutting for the sake of cutting, you are cutting because this is the right time to do it. It is the right opportunity for us to be able to put a House

of Assembly in place that best represents what a House of Assembly should look like with our population, our demographics, and our geography.

It is the time to do it; political sciences will tell us that. Other jurisdictions will tell us that we need to be moving that way. We have already talked about it. It is part of our process every ten years to have that evaluation. We have moved it up one year to say we can do it in the same time frame, have it done before the next election. That becomes the go forward. People will know what districts are carved out and who represents them.

We do still save that money and show that we are fiscally responsible, that everybody in this House did something. Some people in this House will probably do more because they are actually sacrificing their jobs, their employment, and what they stood for.

Part of what you stand for when you get elected is a legacy. Part of that legacy is doing the right thing. That is what we are doing here. That is why the Premier proposed doing this. It is why there has been great debate back and forth. It is why there has been an open dialogue between leaders here. It is about finding what works best for the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker. That is where we came from, that is where we are and, and I am confident that is where we are going.

That will only happen, Mr. Speaker, over the next period of time as we open up and talk about some of the concerns. It is not about talking about why we cannot do something; it is talking about how we can do something. That is where we need to go.

Mr. Speaker, as I have listened to people here, I have seen some people stand up and at times be very apprehensive, but this is the right route to go. I noticed the change in the mindset as the discussion goes around on both sides of the floor about, yes, we need to go there, but be very cognizant of how we go there. How we are going there now is the process that we are about to put in place. A committee, very open, very qualified, and fully resourced to be able to do it. A process that we already have out there, the media already has it out there.

The general public knows what we are proposing. We are proposing radical change to the House of Assembly, but radical change that is going to better represent them, and radical change that also shows we are willing to do what it takes to keep our fiscal house in order. We are going to ask the citizens to co-operate with us on that line also, Mr. Speaker. That is why it is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by saying it has been an honour to be able to speak in this House on Bill 42. It has been an honour to see the co-operation here. There is no doubt there are going to be jabs back and forth, but no doubt people here are on the same mindset and have the same philosophy that the people of this Province should be represented properly, and this is the thing to do.

**MR. SPEAKER (Cross):** Order, please!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the member his time has expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the people in the Opposition who are always talking about relevance and I have not even stood up yet. I always dreamt about standing in the House of Assembly at 3:15 in the morning speaking to a bill, and I guess I get this opportunity.

First of all, I am very pleased, as the Member for Port de Grave, to get an opportunity to speak to Bill 42. Bill 42 obviously is a very important bill to all of us. The basis of the bill is a reduction in the number of seats in the House of Assembly as we go forward.

I think I am not unlike most members I have heard from over this long debate and very passionate debate, may I say, over the last ten or twelve hours. Most people have heard that most of the public want a reduction in the seats in the House of Assembly, and I am no different than

that. Since this broke, I have talked to many people in my district. Again, there are more people saying they would like to see a reduction.

I talked to a gentleman. He called me Friday morning on an issue and we were having a brief conversation. We finished our conversation on the issue he wanted to and he said you are going to cut the seats in the House? I said yes. He said, boy, you should have taken another couple. That is the general consensus that reducing seats in this House is not a bad thing.

In our District of Port de Grave, in my recollections, in my time in the District of Port de Grave I recall three boundary changes, and three boundary changes that sometimes have been very significant. I remember back originally in the District of Port de Grave, it took in basically from Georgetown to Bay Roberts, but did not include Shearstown. Shearstown was in the old district of Harbour Grace.

Harbour Grace was a district represented at one time by Mr. Haig Young. Mr. Young represented Shearstown, Spaniard's Bay, Harbour Grace, Riverhead, Upper Island Cove and Bryant's Cove. Then that district was collapsed in a reform and the Port de Grave district ended up taking in Spaniard's Bay, Bishop's Cove and a piece of Upper Island Cove. It went as far as South River I believe, maybe Makinsons.

Then in another boundary change I recall the District of Port de Grave went as far as Georgetown but ended in Spaniard's Bay. Over the years as we have evolved, the District of Port de Grave has certainly changed. No doubt, the District of Port de Grave will change when we go about passing legislation to reduce the number of seats in this House of Assembly.

One of the things – and I know my hon. colleague, because he represents the other part of this community. One of the things we have heard loud and clear, and it was heard loud and clear at the commission hearings the last time, is the concerns of the people of the Town of Spaniard's Bay. Right now, myself and my hon. colleague from Carbonear – Harbour Grace, we share the Town of Spaniard's Bay. The Town of Spaniard's Bay, certainly under this boundary reform –

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** I say no to my hon. colleague.

The Town of Spaniard's Bay is clearly on the record that the next time the commission meets they will certainly be advocating that their full community be within one district or the other; be it in the District of Port de Grave or whatever that name will be, or whatever the name of the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace will be. I know right now standing here that the people, the council, and the citizens of Spaniard's Bay wish to be under one MHA. They have said it loud and clear and they have been saying it loud and clear for the last seven, eight years, and I support that. The District of Spaniard's Bay and the Town of Spaniard's Bay, I believe should be under one MHA.

Mr. Speaker, in the District of Port de Grave, even though compared to some districts, compared to the district of my colleague from Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune or my colleague from The Straits – White Bay North, I have a district that I sit in the middle of; my home is in the middle of the district. Give me fifteen minutes and I can be in either end of my district. It is a small compact district. Although I represent over 12,000 people in my district, the district is easily accessible.

Also, my district is not as unfamiliar as some of the more rural districts in the Province. I have six municipalities in my district. I also have a local service district in my district. I also have unincorporated areas in my district. I do have – although some would argue it could be urban in nature, there is a very rural aspect to my district in Port de Grave. The citizens there come from all walks and backgrounds of life.

Mr. Speaker, we are always challenged. For electoral boundary reform we are always challenged. We are always challenged on, how do we decide what is the right line in the sand? I know in past commissions population always seemed to be the dominant force.

Mr. Speaker, I think other things need to be taken into account. Population is important, but demographics are important as well. Not only that, I would argue in some areas of the Province

associations, commonalities are important, where people go to buy their groceries, where people go to the doctor, where people go to get their services, because communities in our region of the Province have affinities with each other. We have affinities.

If the people of Carbonear want to go to a hockey rink, where do they go? They go to Harbour Grace. If the people are in Spaniard's Bay and they want to go to a hockey rink, they go to the Bay Arena in Bay Roberts. So, we have affinities. People have traditional patterns of affinity where people go to get their services. I think sometimes that needs to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, Port de Grave is not a whole lot different. I think no matter what happens we will have a different look in that district. It may not be called the District of Port de Grave. I would strongly encourage the commission to continue to use the District of Port de Grave.

Port de Grave, historically, is one of the oldest districts in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe the District of Port de Grave has been in every election since 1862. There might be one that there was not a District of Port de Grave. It is not as old as Ferryland, I may add, but certainly an historic district.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk from all colleagues on both sides of the House. I think, without exception, everybody wants an election in 2015. I know I want an election in 2015.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** I want an election in 2015 and the people of this Province want an election in 2015. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure we can get this work done and that we do everything. I heard some members tonight talk about co-operation and support. As we go through this process there are going to be some strong feelings, and there are going to be some divisions.

We need to work together. We need to co-operate. We need to support each other. If we do not support each other, Mr. Speaker, that lines up for trouble. I know as we go forward we will have that co-operation and support.

With that co-operation and support we all get what we want, we get an election in 2015. That is what every member of this House has said over the last number of days.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of concern about the 120 days. To be honest I also have concerns, but I believe that the people we appoint to the commission are competent people and I believe they can get the job done. They are going to need support.

As members of this House have already said, as well as that, people want to be heard. As the commission goes around this Province, they want to make sure that the commission is going to be accessible. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to make sure that the commission is accessible to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. If that means the commission needs to break up – I think they can have a quorum of two and do more hearings – I think, Mr. Speaker, that is in the best interest of all of us. We need to hear from the people. We need to hear what they believe would make an appropriate district.

Whether the number turns out to be thirty-eight or wherever we are going – because I understand there may be some amendments coming forward from the Opposition. Whatever number we settle on, it is important that we get it right. Demographics and geography must play a part.

We have heard strong advocacy here for Labrador. Mr. Speaker, I want to make a note of the advocacy for Labrador as well because that is where I started my career. I went to the beautiful Town of Happy Valley – Goose Bay in February, Valentine's Day, 1987 actually.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** By yourself?

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** By myself.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Were you sent as a gift?

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** I was no gift hon. minister.

I went to Goose Bay. I spent time in Goose Bay as a youth and recreation specialist they called it then. Mr. Speaker, I had the responsibility for all of Labrador. I got the opportunity to travel

throughout Labrador during my time in Labrador. Labrador is a big place. They do not call it the Big Land for nothing. Labrador is a huge land mass.

I remember going to the Straits and Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. We were going to a parks and recreation regional meeting. I was in a small plane landing in Blanc Sablon. Mr. Speaker, the plane nearly turned around in mid-air. I remember those days fondly. It was a scary flight let me tell you.

Mr. Speaker, there is uniqueness.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Giving a lot of latitude.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** I am glad the Speaker is allowing me latitude at 3:30 o'clock, I say to the hon. member.

One thing I learned while I was in Labrador is the passion and conviction of the people. Whether it is my hon. colleagues, the minister and the Member for Labrador West, or whether it is the colleagues opposite in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and Torngat Mountains, one of the things I always knew about the people of Labrador is that their passion and conviction for their land is second to none. I compliment them all on that.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Oh, oh!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Oh to get heckled at 3:30 in the morning.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of Labrador, I support the four seats for Labrador. There are four distinct regions in Labrador and I believe they need to be represented. I am glad to hear from the minister that as we go forward this evening there will be an amendment put forward that will allow for four seats in Labrador. During my time there I realized the distinctness of it.

When you go to Labrador West you are in a very distinct part of Labrador. When you go to Torngat Mountains and you go to Makkovik and Nain, it is a very different piece than Labrador West. I want to compliment and congratulate my hon. colleagues for their advocacy within caucus and Cabinet. I want to congratulate the

members opposite for their passion and commitment as well.

Mr. Speaker, as we wind down here I just want to say, to review for just a second, that when the commission is in place, the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador will appoint a justice to be the head of the commission. All parties will get an opportunity to have representation on this committee. It is important that all parties be represented because this is an important time. It is an important time in our history.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward and we go through this process of reducing this House – and as my hon. colleague from Terra Nova said, he might have to have a little bit of a discussion with my hon. colleague from Bonavista North. They might have to have some kind of jellybean fight or something he talked about. That is going to happen and there are going to be challenges, but I think all parties have an active role to play here in appointing good representation. These people have a big piece of work to do and an important piece of work to do.

I had the good fortune this past summer to be in New Brunswick. They were just finishing electoral reform, Mr. Speaker, where they had reduced their House or legislative assembly, as they call it, by seven members. They increased the number of representation and people want to know that they are going to be represented. Whether you are representing one in 3,000 or one in 12,000, the people of this Province want to know that their MHA is representing them. That is very important.

The concerns that I heard in New Brunswick when they decreased their House by seven members, Mr. Speaker, was the concern of representation. I think we can represent a larger number of people in a larger demographic area. It is going to take some work, and it is going to take some commitment from all of us.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward, I just want to say that I support Bill 42. I support that we will have an election in 2015, and I look forward to the amendments that are coming forward, which I think are significant amendments and will protect some of the unique and distinct cultural and resource issues in Labrador.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for my opportunity to speak and to get my point of view on the record.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HUNTER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the boundaries are not changed yet, so we are still going to go with Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, which I am very honoured to be representing in this House of Assembly for the last sixteen years, going into the seventeenth year now in the spring. It is certainly indeed a pleasure to get up and have a few words to say on Bill 42. Of course, I am not going to say much new, Mr. Speaker. There has been a lot said here today, and the last few days actually, and it is going to be hard to say anything new. It is going to be hard to stay relevant to the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I know in the last two hours, for sure, a lot of people have been speaking and have been saying things over and over and over because basically the intent of the bill is what we are speaking on. There is not much new you could say other than try to relate it to your own district.

I remember back in 1987, when I first ran part of my district back then was called Windsor – Springdale – no, it was Windsor – Buchans back in 1987. I remember well when I ran in 1989 and 1993 in the same District of Windsor – Buchans. I knocked on pretty well every door in the district; three times, I might add.

After 1996, the district was changed to Windsor – Springdale. Of course, when I wanted to run again it was a whole new ball game. It was a whole new district. The Town of Springdale was added and Green Bay South. Of course, all the time I ran in the Windsor – Buchans district, all those doors that I knocked on certainly did

not help me in 1999 when I ran for Windsor – Springdale. I must say, I was very, very pleased to be elected to the House of Assembly for the District of Windsor – Springdale back in 1999. I found the Green Bay area, and the Green Bay South, Springdale area, very, very honourable to serve that area.

Now my colleague, the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, certainly has the biggest part of that district that I had back in 1999 up to 2007. Now my district is Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South. It is an honour to serve in that district, too, Mr. Speaker.

We are all concerned about the boundaries. We are not sure what the boundaries are going to be. I know my colleague from the District of Exploits, if he takes in part of my district, then I have to decide if I am going to take him on in a nomination. The same thing applies to my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans.

I think, overall, things will work out with boundary changes, Mr. Speaker. I think when we decide that we want to run and put our name on a ballot for any district, that we have good intentions. In my years here in this House, I have not seen an MHA yet who did not put everything into his job or her job, and the calibre of people we get representing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have been listening very intently in the last few days to most of the member here who have spoken. It is a learning process. It is not unique to the needs of all the districts. We have people calling everyday looking for roadwork and water and sewer, and all kinds of things. We are pretty well even in a way when it comes to serving our districts and our people.

I do respect Labrador, and the Member for Torngat Mountains and the challenge he has serving his district, even the member before him who I knew very well. We had a lot of discussions about the role he played in his district. I really admire MHAs like the Member for Torngat, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and the Labrador members, my colleagues on this side, the hard work they put in for their districts.

I am very pleased to be sitting in this House of Assembly with such a calibre of people. The honesty and the hard work they put in and to be able to participate in things, especially when we come to the private member's resolution. I was very honoured to be here to be part of that resolution put forward by the member here. It makes things a bit more pleasurable when we do something good because we all have things in our districts that sometimes are difficult, very, very difficult.

This bill we are debating today, and the last couple of days, I know has been a challenge for a lot of people in this House. People are not sure what the boundaries are going to be and not sure if they are going to be sitting here after the election in the fall. There are some concerns we may not be going into an election until 2016, but I feel very comfortable and very assured that we are going to be into an election this year in 2015. Whether all of us are going to put our names forward and on the ballot again, I am not sure who will and who will not but it is a decision we all have to make very, very soon.

Mr. Speaker, like I said when I first started out, what do you say about this bill after almost every member is after speaking about it in this House? What do you say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador when we are not sure what is going to happen with respect to the next election? Who is to say we are going to be in power after the next election? We do not know that.

We do not know the political side of this bill, but we all have to think about it. We all have to make sure we do our best to serve our districts. Putting our name on the ballot is probably one of the toughest choices we have to make in our careers because not everybody runs a second time, third time, fourth time. In my case, it will be seven times running.

When I was listening to all the members tonight and listening to this bill, I said, what am I going to speak about? Should I read this bill out again? Maybe some people are just tuning in, like my colleague said over there earlier, a couple of hours ago when he was speaking. Maybe someone is tuning in who does not know about this bill. So I could be pretty boring and read it all out again if you want to do that.

Maybe it is worthwhile for me to do that. We all know what it is in here but I guess for the many, many people who are listening tonight in their homes, sitting down and drinking coffee – like our members here tonight, Mr. Speaker, I think they are getting a bit hungry now. They are talking about breakfast already.

This bill is an Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act, Bill 42. Mr. Speaker, like I said, it is not new to me. I have been around the political scene for forty years. I was involved in the party for forty years, so this act is probably something we have all thought about up to now. If I may, I would just like to read down through some of the things.

In the Explanatory Notes, this bill would amend the Electoral Boundaries Act. The three points that are in the bill are, “require the electoral boundaries commission to report upon the delimitation of the province into districts in 2015; reduce the number of one-member districts in the province to 38”.

Now, I am not sure what the amendments are going to end up doing tonight, but there was a lot of concern about the number of seats, Mr. Speaker. I remember back many years ago when I first got involved in politics – and I think representation by the number of seats depends on the calibre of the member. If the members do a good job – which I have not seen any proof or any evidence, since I have been here, that we had any members not worthy of being here. I have seen such fantastic work done by all members on all sides and all parties.

The third point in the Explanatory Notes, “make consequential amendments for the purpose of a commission report in 2015.” Like a lot of my colleagues were saying, 2015 is just a year earlier than when it would normally happen anyway. It is scheduled to happen in 2016; 2016 would be after the provincial election, which I am sure we are going to be into before the end of this year. If we go into 2016, then we are going to have to rely on old information and old census information. It would probably not be fair to prolong the election to 2019, if we have to wait for a new census to be taken in 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I can still read down through the act for those who have not heard it yet. I think

there are probably a lot who did not, and I am sure they are listening tonight.

“1. Section 6 of the Electoral Boundaries Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (1) the following: (1.1) For the purpose of the appointment of a commission in 2015, the speaker of the House of Assembly shall appoint the members of the commission not more than 5 days after the appointment of the chairperson under section 3.

“2. Section 13 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted: 13.(1) In the calendar year 2015 the commission shall divide the province into 38 proposed one-member districts.

“(2) In the calendar year beginning in 2026, and every 10 calendar years after that, the commission shall, as soon as is convenient after March 31, divide the province into 38 proposed one-member districts.

“(3) The commission shall determine a quotient for each proposed district by dividing the total population of the province by the number 37.” Mr. Speaker, I guess after tonight we are not sure exactly what is going to happen yet but the amendments are certainly going to make this a little bit different.

“(4) For the purpose of establishing the quotient for the preparation of a report in 2015, the population of the province shall be taken as in the latest census figures available under the Statistics Act (Canada)...” That would be some area of concern for a lot of the members who were speaking on the opposite side. That certainly made it quite clear that this could be a big problem.

In some districts on the Avalon, maybe some of the members have alluded to, that it is okay because some of the members on the Avalon, particularly in the St. John’s area, might get the number of people in the district they need just down the street or a couple of streets but in rural Newfoundland it could be so much different. I have seen these changes in rural Newfoundland and I have to tell you, it is not in my time here. I did not see it a whole lot different representing more people in rural Newfoundland with the technology that we have today. It is a lot easier. I know we do not have cell coverage

everywhere, but it is a lot easier to represent people today than it was even ten years ago.

I remember the first nomination I went to back in 1987, with five people running for the nomination. It was very difficult trying to get your support out because we never had cellphones and computers. We had to basically rely on the landlines.

I remember at the Legion that night in the nomination meeting when candidates were tying up one phone line in the building and a couple of buildings nearby. The other candidates were trying to get into different buildings to get to a landline, a phone line to get their supporters out. Today we do not have to do that if we have cellphone coverage, particularly in some of the bigger areas.

I find in my district I have cellphone coverage pretty well all throughout the district. It is so much easier now to call on your supporters to either get out e-mails, or cellphones. There is always a way you can rely on your supporters getting out. Just seeing the difference in today and what it was even just ten years ago, it is just unbelievable that we can sit down in front of a screen and come up with a list of voters and drag those voters out for your support in a nomination, or even on election day.

By changing this, I think the time is right. Our Premier is keeping to his word and making this part of the mandate of this government to put forward changes in the House of Assembly. That was not an easy decision for any leader to make, because the first thing you have to do is look around and see who is not going to be around here in the next election. We really do not know that, because we do not know the boundaries yet.

I know everybody must be nervous. I am particularly not nervous because I have not fully decided yet if I am going to run again or not, but I do feel for the members and my colleagues in the House who really want to come back to work and really want to continue working for their districts, continue doing great work for their districts. That has to be a concern for all the members in the House; all the members on the opposite side and the members on our side. It is the right thing to do at this particular time in our

history now when we have to look at big deficits and trying to decide what are we going to do with the few dollars we are going to have.

We have been very fortunate, Mr. Speaker, in the last number of years with the oil prices so high that we did do necessary work that we had been waiting for many years trying to get done in the Province. In the last few years we saw opportunity to do all these good things with roads and hospitals and schools.

I remember back when I was in Opposition, Mr. Speaker, we had leaky windows and roofs in some of the schools in my district. There was absolutely no money to do windows and doors and roofs, and no money to do roadwork, no money to enhance the health care to make health care more efficient, and better diagnostic equipment for the patients in the hospitals. So, by doing this, it is part of a solution of our deficit. It is part of the financial solution that we need. It is part of a commitment by our leader and our Premier. It is part of a commitment by a government that is concerned about the future of the Province, the future of the people in all of our districts.

We do have to do these things. We do have to do a certain amount of repairs in schools, hospitals, and that – to change this act to make sure the people of Newfoundland are still going to be represented in the House of Assembly, and that we do these hard things. I congratulate the Premier for taking this hard stand and doing this.

I am going to clue up now, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the few minutes tonight to speak.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

**MR. PEACH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to stand in this House at 3:49 in the morning and take my place as the MHA for the District of Bellevue and speak a few words on the Bill 42, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).



**MR. PEACH:** If you are going to keep on at me, you might get me to sit down again. You encouraged me to get up so now listen to what I have to say.

When I started out as an MHA and I looked at the district I had to represent from New Harbour to the Burin Peninsula, and the distance I had to travel across my district – I listened to other people in the House over the last couple of days talking about their districts and the distance they had to travel, and the different places they had to go. I look at my district where I have a three-hour drive across my district; I certainly appreciate when other people say they have four and five hours. I know my colleague here from Placentia – St. Mary's has 500 kilometres-odd to travel. Our districts are pretty complex.

The Trans Canada is I guess the only thing that separates Placentia – St. Mary's and my district in the Whitbourne area. I do not know too much about the districts back over the years because I did not live in the Bellevue district only since 1989. It was my understanding that when the hon. Jim Reid was the member in the House of Assembly back then he represented what was known as Trinity South.

Then the district got changed somewhat again shortly after that which took in part of the Clarendville district. It took in the Hodge's Cove area down through the Hodge's Cove area, down that shore, and went so far as Goobies. Then after that the boundaries got changed again and it took in the Burin Peninsula. In 2006, when the boundaries got changed, it got changed again and Trinity – Bay de Verde used to be in Dildo and New Harbour. Those two communities got added into the Bellevue district.

I sit back now and I listen to what we are talking about, the boundaries changing, and I wonder what it is going to be moulded out to be this time because the district that I have can go either way. The district that I have could go down the shore towards Green's Harbour, Whiteway, which would be part of Trinity – Bay de Verde. The district could probably take in part of Placentia – St. Mary's, which I know already that there have been some presentations made. Some people from the Whitbourne area and the Long Harbour area have been talking about getting the boundaries changed. They wanted to

be in the Bellevue district because they were so close to the Bellevue district. Often, me and my colleague have spoken about that. He said you can have them and take the roads with them.

When we look sat that, there is good representation there. Our member has represented Long Harbour and Whitbourne very, very well. Long Harbour at one time was in my district. In 2006, it got changed for some reason. From what I can understand it was for economic reasons it got changed because of Vale Inco and the businesses that are going on in Argentina. They thought that it was more economically feasible to have those two towns put together in that district. Whitbourne, at that time in 2006, was under Harbour Main. They took Whitbourne and put it in with Placentia – St. Mary's. They took Long Harbour out and put Long Harbour in with Placentia – St. Mary's because there was more uniqueness on the go there with the Vale Inco site on Long Harbour road and between Argentina and Placentia.

Once the boundary changes come again this time one would wonder if the Burin Peninsula is going to be part of my district. Is my district going to go back down towards Hodge's Cove? Is the district going to exist at all? One does not know. We do not know. As many of you have said before me, none of us knows how the boundaries are going to be moulded and how the boundaries are going to be.

I certainly want to say thank you to our Premier for the very bold move in making the decision to move forward with the reduction in the House. It is not the first time I have heard it. I have heard it many times going through my district and in the discussions I have had with people in my district; why don't you decrease the numbers in the House of Assembly? No one ever came up with the answer of how many. Our Premier has made this bold move of moving the numbers down to thirty-eight and I really support that.

I support our caucus. I support our Cabinet on that decision. I support our Premier on the great job that he is doing and the great leadership that he has given this caucus on this side.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen many things over the years that have happened in the districts when it comes to the boundaries. When I first took over

as MHA and I travelled from Norman's Cove to Blaketown, one day I put in my travel claim. Somebody said how can you claim to travel from Norman's Cove to Blaketown? I said why? They said where are your boundaries there? I said I do not know, tell me.

When I went to check it out my boundaries were inside the Trans Canada. Somebody had to define if I was travelling in my district. Because I was claiming inter-district travel, somebody had to determine that the boundaries were in the centre of the Trans Canada going to Blaketown on one side or on the other side. It was really a tangle up for me and I was not really sure where I was going. I asked them if I had to get on an ATV to get there or did I have to go from Norman's Cove across the bay in a boat. It took two or three days for somebody to define that but it was finally worked out.

I certainly support this amendment, Bill 42. I can only say and hope that the committee that is put together really does a good job and that everybody in this House is quite satisfied with the work that will be done.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to get up and close out debate on this important issue we are talking about here this evening on reforming the House of Assembly and reducing the number of seats that we have here. I want to thank all members who participated in the debate, first of all. It has been a lot of lively discussion, lots of very interesting perspectives on what it is we are trying to accomplish and the process that we are going to go through to try to accomplish that.

For those who may be tuned in for the first time at 3:57 a.m., perhaps I could start out by simply saying we are debating Bill 42 here this evening which is a bill that outlines a process to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly by ten, at this point in time at least. We

anticipate there may be amendments that will come forth in Committee.

It is a piece of legislation designed to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly and part of a package of initiatives that have been identified by the Premier, along with pension reform and actual reform of the Legislature here itself, as a means of focusing on trying to improve the things we do and how we do it.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Relevance.

**MR. KING:** I welcome my colleague the Opposition House Leader to join in at any point in time when I need a breath of fresh air to stand and raise a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about changing the number of seats for a number of reasons. Many of us have focused on the fact that there is cost savings. There is no doubt that we are talking about a sum of money in the area of \$2.5 million a year, which is a very significant amount of money if you think for a moment about many of the items we discuss in here on a daily basis.

As a matter of fact, only yesterday we had a very important debate where there was unanimous agreement on an all-party committee on mental health and many other initiatives like that where \$2.5 million could make a significant difference.

So, for those out there, particularly those in the media sometimes who criticize and say when you are looking at a potential deficit of \$600 million or \$700 million or \$800 million or \$900 million, \$2.5 million saved is pittance. Well, it is all contextual, I suppose. For us, it is a significant amount of money. It is an effort to demonstrate to the public that we are serious about starting right here in our own shop in trying to contribute to saving money.

It is also important, Mr. Speaker, that it is not only about the savings. It is about recognizing it has been some time since there has been a review of the number of seats in the Legislature. I think, unequivocally, as we listen to all members speaking here this evening, without a doubt, I do not think I have heard one member say that they are against reducing the number of seats. The population in Newfoundland and

Labrador has changed fairly significantly over the past number of years.

One of the things that we have to be mindful of as we go through this exercise, of course, is that as we reform the Legislature we have to be mindful that it is still all about democracy and ensuring that districts have proper and adequate representation.

As a number of my colleagues have said over the last number of hours since we have been debating this today in particular, times have changed from the way things used to be many years ago with the advent of cellphones, other types of technology, texting, and I think I heard my colleague for Cape St. Francis say this afternoon that he gets more e-mails on Facebook than he does on regular e-mail. Actually, I think that same thing applies to me. People reach out in many ways and there are many different formats you can use to reach out to your constituents.

Fundamentally, it is about democracy, it is about ensuring that people in the Province, on the Island part of Newfoundland and, of course, in Labrador have proper and adequate representation.

There have been a number of thoughts shared here this evening on how we might move forward. The bill has been drafted, of course, and laid on the Table. Members of the Opposition have shared some ideas on some amendments they would like to bring forward. Of course, members on the government side this evening have talked about some changes that we are interested in either supporting or advancing ourselves.

There has been some discussion amongst all of the parties and I hope at least that there can be a way to move forward from this debate this evening where we will see some consensus reached that it is important to get on with the business of reform of the House of Assembly in the Province because, as everyone knows, time is of the essence. We are all focused very clearly on going into a provincial general election. I think it is late September, if I am not mistaken, that it has to be held – I stand to be corrected, but sometime within September or the first week of October.

In order for this process to take effect and to make a difference in the Province, we have to get on with the process. So, I do encourage all members who have spoken in support of this to certainly support, as we move forward, any amendments that look to improve the bill and try to get it through the Legislature so that we can get on with the business of what has to happen.

The process, for those who are, again, just tuning in for the first time, the review will actually be done, there will be some parameters established here this evening, whenever the debate finalizes. The parameters will be established where there will be an independent committee appointed, chaired by, I suspect it will be a judge – certainly appointed by the chief judge for the Province – and four other individuals appointed by yourself, of course, as Speaker of the House of Assembly.

The process will unfold over – I believe the time frame being discussed is 120 days.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How many months is that?

**MR. KING:** There would be four months in 120 days, I believe. Just check with the Finance minister; he is better on math than I am.

Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity here for members of the Province to become engaged, and many people are not engaged in politics in any significant way on a regular basis, but this presents an opportunity for people to become engaged in their communities and in their regions as the independent committee will reach out and will seek input from people. They will want to hear views.

I am certain, as my colleague for Bay of Islands said earlier, that will not be an easy process on anyone. For those of us who are sitting in the House here today with the prospect of fewer seats, it means fewer opportunities to get re-elected. As the seats change, the boundaries change. When the boundaries change, the dynamics of communities change.

There is lots to be discussed and I certainly encourage people in the Province to become a part of the process and to provide their views on how they feel about the district they are in now,

how they feel about realignment, what the new district might look like and make sure that they take the opportunity to share that information with members of the commission, because that is the kind of information that is going to inform the commission and inform the decisions that they make.

Again, one of my colleagues said, as the process unfolds and new boundaries are established things can become confusing for people, particularly when new boundaries are implemented. I remember, as a story, in the 2007 election actually, the first day of the campaign I went out and spent a full day knocking on doors and had a great day actually. I put up somewhere around fifty, fifty-five, or sixty lawn signs I think it was, a great day, painted it blue –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. KING:** I say to my colleague from the Burin Peninsula no, it was not a headquarters.

I painted the community blue, Mr. Speaker, only to find out the first thing the next morning that the boundary had shifted so the winner in all of this was my colleague, the Member for Burin – Placentia West, who now owned that particular community. I spent two hours, picked up every sign I had and put his sign back in, and he had a day's work done in an hour. That is how the boundaries confuse people sometimes; even politicians get confused.

I am going to be brief and conclude my comments. We are going to move the debate I think from here into committee stage, but I do want to thank the Premier for leadership on behalf of government in moving this initiative forward. It does take a lot of guts and a lot of strong leadership and strong desire and will to make change happen.

I also want to acknowledge members of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party who participated in discussions today, all recognizing that we need to make change. My hope would be, as I said a few moments ago, that as we move into the committee stage there are going to be a number of amendments put forth and debated that I think, when we see the amendments put forth by

members I think they will enhance and improve the bill that is before the House.

It will be my strongest hope that all members would become united around the common purpose of what this is all about, which is making this Legislature smaller and I believe more effective. Let us get on with the business of appointing the committee and getting the process started so that we can get the results back and have the reduced Legislature, the new boundaries designed and implemented in time for the election that, as I said a few moments ago, will occur. As I said, I believe it is sometime in late September of 2015.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity and thank all members, and I will take my place.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Seeing no further speakers, is it –

Is the minister standing to close debate?

**MR. WISEMAN:** I am, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance to close debate.

**MR. WISEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This has been a long day, but an interesting one. There has been lots of good discussion, lots of good contribution to this debate.

Bill 42, one of our colleagues in the House described this as a monumental and significant transition for the structure of the House of Assembly, the representation that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have. I think the appreciation for the significance of this change has been reflected in the emotion and the intensity and the conviction of the comments made by members of this House on all sides.

I do not want to prolong the debate in second reading, nor do I want to repeat what all of the members have said, but I do want to thank everybody who has participated in this discussion for their contribution to this debate that we are having on Bill 42. In a few moments

we are going to get into committee, and, no doubt, as we get into committee there will also be some good debate, good discussion, and good questions. At the end of the day, as with all bills as they come to the House, there will be a vote on the bill and with a majority support for it, it will pass in the House and I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will be well served by it.

Again, I thank everybody for their contribution. I look forward to the continued discussion as we move into committee.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House that Bill 42 be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act. (Bill 42)

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

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

**MR. KING:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House Presently, by leave. (Bill 42)

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 42.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 42.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Littlejohn):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 42, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act". (Bill 42)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to stand here this evening, this morning, today, whenever it is, to speak to Bill 42, clause 1 of this very important piece of legislation.

I last spoke on Tuesday. I think today is still Thursday, according to the Parliamentary calendar. I seem to recall us having a similar type debate once where it was Thursday but it might have been Tuesday, something along those lines.

I have been counting the number of speakers we have had to this piece of legislation. I think we have had close to full participation by all

members of this House speaking to this bill, Bill 42.

I think a lot of people were taken aback when this bill was first brought in, or first discussed last Thursday. It was certainly a shock to many people, a surprise to many people, certainly on our side of the House. We did not anticipate this bill coming. Since that time it has been really a whirlwind. When you think about it, it has been seven days since that time.

To go back through a timeline of this piece of legislation, we received a draft copy of it on Saturday morning. We looked through it. We had the briefing on Monday morning. We had another version given to us Monday afternoon.

There was some talk earlier in the week about being obstructionist. We have always made clear that we had no intent on being obstructionist. There is a difference between keeping a bill held up for no good reason and making sure the bill gets the proper scrutiny that it should. That is why the Opposition made sure – we wanted to have a good look at this and make sure we had a number of sets of eyes on it to do the briefing, to talk about it, to discuss it amongst our caucus.

One of the things with our caucus – it was only a couple of years ago I stood here and there were six of us. We were mainly from rural Newfoundland and we had two members from Labrador. Since that time we have grown. We have added members from the urban areas. We have added members from all over. We have really expanded and we have gotten a wide array of viewpoints when it comes to the parliamentary process to representing constituents. That is really what this bill is about, is representing constituents and our ability to do so.

It has been said that the purpose of this piece of legislation was to reduce it. We have heard on a number of occasions the cost factor. We can do it to reduce costs, but at the same time do it effectively. We have spoken from a similar vein. I do not think this type of reform should be linked directly to our economic fortunes because that could be a very slippery slope. We have had a week in this House to stand here and every day we have had the opportunity not just

to debate this piece of legislation, but to ask questions. Virtually all of the questions have come around the state that this Province is in right now. Obviously one of the big factors is the price of oil.

I think we have made clear that even though we support the concept of seat reduction – we have all spoken to that – I do not think we have ever linked it to the fact that it should be dependent on what the price of oil is and what our economic circumstances are. That presents itself with a very slippery slope where if the cost of oil goes down, are we going to drop more members? If the price goes up, we are going to add people back in. We cannot do that. That is imperative. That is not where we come from.

It has been stated on many occasions, sometimes by members on the other side and certainly by members on our side – but our leader has always maintained for at least a couple of years now that he felt the House could be just as efficient and operate just as effectively with fewer members. He referenced forty. It could be lower, it could be higher. He wanted an independent commission to look at that. He wanted it to happen in 2016. Now we are here faced today with doing it sooner and this is the situation that we find ourselves in.

One of the things I want to talk about is that we are faced here – and I did not go into this as much during my first opportunity to speak. I spoke during second reading and used just over fifty minutes as the Opposition House Leader and Justice Critic, normally the department responsible for carrying this bill. I spoke about a number of things.

One thing I did not speak a whole lot about was my District of Burgeo – La Poile, which is like the districts of virtually every member in this House, except for the members from Labrador now that we know the seats from Labrador are going to remain the same. We called for that. We are happy to see it and now happy to hear that tonight. I hear the Leader of the NDP seems to think she is solely responsible for that, but again, there it is.

What I can say is that our position has remained the same since this began and we are happy to see that.

**MS MICHAEL:** (Inaudible).

**MR. A. PARSONS:** It is hard sometimes to debate this when the Leader of the NDP is heckling me. I am trying to stay where we are. I am trying to stay on this piece of legislation and this bill and talk about my District of Burgeo – La Poile, which is one that faces, obviously, expansion. It is hard to sometimes fathom.

I believe it was after the last boundary commission the district has gotten bigger. It used to be from just basically Cape Ray down to Rose Blanche and then down taking in La Poile and Grand Bruit. La Poile and Grand Bruit both had to be serviced by ferry. Then, it expanded and took in Burgeo. I think it was around 1996 that act became effective. That was a big change because even though Burgeo is further along the coastline, you do not go down there by ferry. You have to drive, basically, three hours. You drive past the Stephenville turnoff and drive down the Burgeo road. It is a long way.

I have been very lucky. The road itself is not fun I can guarantee you that. I know the Minister of Transportation has heard a lot about that road in the last couple of months. He has had to deal with situations down there. Once you get off that road, which is not so fun, it is a great community.

Then, in 2006 it expanded to take in the island of Ramea and the community of Grey River, both of which are very, very remote. For Ramea you need one-and-a-half hours on ferry, and for Grey River it is another hour and a half down the way. They are beautiful communities but isolated. They have their very strong points, but they have their challenges as any resident in those communities will tell you.

I have always laughed that I have had to drive through a good portion of the District of St. George's – Stephenville East just to get back into mine. As soon as I go past Cape Ray I am in that district. I drive past McDougall's, drive past the beautiful Codroy Valley, drive past South Branch right on up past Stephenville turnoff and then you hit the Burgeo road. I have always found that interesting.

I am faced with expansion. I cannot imagine my district is going to get smaller. Even though geographically I have a huge district, I am faced with the fact that my district has gotten smaller population-wise, which is very sad. It is a fact that is faced by many here in this House.

I look on with great interest, with great concern, and with great optimism as to what we will face after this commission does their work. I do not know what we are dealing with. I know people are concerned. They want to make sure they get the same representation and you hope that you can deliver that same representation. I am looking forward to seeing how that process unfolds.

I have watched it from afar the last time in 2006. I was not quite engaged in politics. I knew the process was ongoing. I was part of groups that made representations as just watching, seeing how they did that. It is going to be interesting to see how it unfolds and I look forward to it.

I know the commission is going to have, as it has always had – you have your justice who chairs it. Then you are going to have your four members who are going to be picked basically by the different parties. They are by the Speaker, but we know there are representations made to have these people put on. It is a hard job. It is a hard job to travel the Province and sit down and listen to all the presentations that are made, and all the submissions that are made. It is an important job. It is one that takes great dedication.

I look forward to seeing how this process unfolds, hopefully getting back here within the 120 day time period that I think is an important part of this. I do not mind saying, as we have said on numerous occasions, I think the 120 days is a tight timeline. I am hoping, as has been stated by members on – especially on the other side because this is a piece of legislation proposed by the government, and the logic behind it has always been that the 120 days is adequate.

I do think that in the ten years since the last one technology has advanced. Obviously it will be easier. I do not know if they use things like Skype. Obviously it has unfolded so much, but it is still going to require a lot of travel. No

matter how much technology unfolds, our great geography stays the same. That highway stays the same. People have to travel, people have to fly.

I look forward to watching this process and seeing how it unfolds. I believe I am going to have the opportunity during this Committee stage to ask many more questions, to make my points, and to get them across. I am sure members from all sides are going to stand here and get the same points across.

I think at this point I am going to sit and let one of my colleagues have an opportunity to address the Chair, to speak about clause 1, and to speak about Bill 42. I look forward to moving on into the morning.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to finally, after a long, long, long time of sitting throughout Thursday and the continuation of Thursday listening to my colleagues, being able to get another chance to speak to this bill.

Last week we were quite surprised, shocked – I was – to get word that the government was looking at doing something fairly radical, and that was going against legislation that is in place, the Electoral Boundaries Act, to start the process of the electoral boundaries commission a year earlier than our legislation calls for.

This bill, Bill 42, while it is a short bill, is a fairly radical one because it is doing something that we have never talked about here in the House. Nobody had talked about the electoral boundaries commission over the past year. Nobody had talked about the fact that perhaps we needed to look at doing something earlier. There was no discussion anywhere that I am aware of and then, all of a sudden, we get this announcement that we are going to be brought into the House of Assembly at a time of year when nobody can hardly remember when the government sat here in January – not that I have

a problem with that. As a matter of fact, I think we should be in the House much more frequently than we are, but we were being brought in to do one thing and one thing only, and that was to deal with this bill, Bill 42.

Since getting this bill last Thursday when we first got the statement from the Premier, and that statement outlined what it was that the bill was about, we saw things that were rather startling, that we were going to have a major cut to seats in the House of Assembly by ten, that we also were going to have changes that would leave wide open the issue of the seats in Labrador – and I do not take credit for the fact that government has changed its position from its bill, but I do take credit for the fact that from the first minute that I saw that in the statement from the Premier, from the first minute that I saw the seats in Labrador were not going to be protected, I said that was wrong. I will take credit for that.

That got reaction from people because people in Labrador certainly – I knew when I read it, this could not happen and I said it immediately. I was not open to that and I said it immediately. I take credit for that because so much had gone into, over the years, getting to the point where Labrador had four seats. The fact that the Premier could even think about, and a government that has said over the past years that I have been here in this House that they care so much for Labrador, that they were not even going to take responsibility for ensuring that those four seats remained. So, I will take credit for that.

One of the things that have happened since this bill has come to us, because initially the bill was a bill to cut districts, to cut seats. That is what the bill is all about. That is what the core of the bill is all about. Whatever is in the bill, as I said the other day, are consequential amendments for the purpose of making the core of the bill work. That is what the bill is all about.

Since getting the bill, since this bill has become public, since people out there have started reading it, we and not only we, every MHA in this House has been receiving information from people who really know what this is all about. The political scientists in our Province –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!



**MS MICHAEL:** Mr. Chair, could I ask for some silence here?

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you.

I am going to repeat this because I have said it in this House before; I do have a hearing impediment. It is not serious but when extraneous sound is going on around me, I literally lose my focus so I am asking for that, please.

MHAs in this House have received the same e-mails that I have received from some of our political scientists in this Province. Those political scientists, the experts in this Province and the experts at our university who study the political system, are shocked by Bill 42. They are shocked by many of the things that I am shocked about and one of those people – they have been public, so we can say their names. We have received their e-mails. For example, Dr. Russell Williams wrote all of us, sent all of us an e-mail, and then made part of that his analysis of what the impact of Bill 42 would be.

He and other political scientists at the university have pointed out, number one, that you just do not cut seats without doing a full analysis of why those seats need to be cut. One of the professors at the university has gone so far as to say there should not be any cuts in this House of Assembly. Yet, in its wisdom, this government and now the Official Opposition with them are saying oh yes, the cuts have to happen even though there has been no analysis, even though there has been no study, even though we have not put an electoral boundaries commission in place to do its work. We have not heard –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** We have not heard a solid reason, Mr. Chair. We have not heard a solid reason for why this is happening – why a year earlier than is required this is happening. Especially when we look at the fact that apparently our system that is in existence must be okay, because what Bill 42 does – everything that is related to what is happening in 2015 and

in one of sections – and I will talk more about it when we get to that – everything reverts back after 2015. By that I mean, instead of things happening, they are happening in 2015. Instead of things that we thought would happen in 2016 are happening in 2015; but after this year, and after we do what is going to happen in 2015, ten years after 2016 is when the next electoral boundaries commission is going to be.

So in other words, doing the work every ten years, apparently, is fine; that is not a problem. So then the question is: Why is it happening this year and not in 2016? If ten years is not fine, then why is government not changing the system that we have? They are not changing the system. For some unspoken reason, for something that they will not come out and say what the real reason is, something is happening this year and this year only, and the system remains the same. So ten years after 2016 will be the next electoral boundaries commission – ten years after 2016. Not ten years after 2015, not five years after 2015, but exactly the same system that exists in our act right now.

They have ignored the voice of people with expertise in the Province. There have been people from outside the Province who have spoken out about this. The points that we have made here in this House, the points that I and my colleagues made in second reading, are not things that we have made up as individuals. They are things that people with expertise are talking about. There are people with expertise who know that this process is wrong.

As I have said right from the beginning, and a lot of my colleagues have used the phrase – maybe they would have used it anyway – but the cart is being put before the horse. The commission should be put in place; the commission should be given the task to do its work. I heard from the government side of the House, I think it was today or Thursday, talking about we have to give the commission flexibility, so we will give them a range. Maybe we will change and give them a range.

The flexibility is to say to the commission, you do the analysis. You do what has to be done with regard to analyzing who we are as a Province, analyzing the number of seats we have, and the flexibility is for you to look at the

picture and give us recommendations. That is the flexibility, not coming up with a range of seats for them before we have done any kind of analysis.

Mr. Chair, I am looking forward to the rest of Committee of the Whole because there are many points I want to raise.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John's North.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a pleasure to stand again and speak to Bill 42 respecting the electoral boundaries commission. There is a lot of humour here this morning. I am very happy to see that after such a lengthy period of time that we have all been participating in the debate yesterday, today, and the last few days.

I have to agree with other members who have spoken. When we all work together in the House of Assembly we can come to conclusions about legislation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** It is really important that we are able to achieve some consensus because I think we all agree that politics is about compromise. There is really no benefit to be uncompromising all of the time and to be obstructionist. I think it is important sometimes to put your heads together and try and find a way to move forward. I think that is what has happened with the four Labrador seats. We all agree we would need to protect those seats for the people of Labrador, for the voters there, and that is exactly what happened. That is a very positive thing, Mr. Chair.

I have to agree with other people who have spoken as well, that there are a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador who are calling for seat reduction. There is certainly the odd person out there who is against that. I have heard from

two or three people who believe we need more seats and we need to keep the same number of seats but I think the majority of us, here at least, feel we can get this work done with fewer members.

I have talked to people across the country – in fact, in the past week – who tend to agree that we can have actually a vibrant committee structure in this Province with fewer members. We have talked about what that number would be. It would be nice to see some direction given by the House. I do not really believe it is a responsible manner for us to conduct ourselves in to sort of throw this out to a commission and not provide any parameters to them. I think that is completely irresponsible if we were to do that.

I think we have to give advice to a commission. They have hard enough work to do as it is. We should give them some guidance on where the House of Assembly, or at least the majority of the Members of the House of Assembly see this going. We do have some responsibility. We also have to ensure they have some degree of flexibility in whatever direction that is provided by the House of Assembly, and that is incredibly reasonable. So I wanted to agree with those things.

I am still a little perplexed about the way all of this unfolded. As I said earlier in the debate with the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Deputy Premier, and the Premier, the Member for Topsail having been more or less successfully contesting their nominations, at least in the Premier's case, and the gentleman who is going up against the Leader of the Opposition, Humber Valley, having secured his nomination. That going on, and then we had Christmas. Then all of a sudden someone leaked this to VOXM last Monday. It was all the news, and it is a big surprise to us.

I know the Premier and the Finance Minister – we never heard from the Minister of Justice, interestingly enough, who is responsible for this legislation. We never heard from her on it first or last, but I know the Minister of Finance and the Premier, and some other members of his caucus and Cabinet, were out there fear mongering saying the Official Opposition were going to be obstructionists and not going to cooperate and so on.

We have certainly come to this debate with a lot of good will. We wanted to make sure we would have a thorough, thoughtful debate. That there would be the sorts of deliberations on this piece of legislation in the House of Assembly that the public expects from us. That we would not necessarily obstruct it but we would ensure the process is dealt with in a very deliberate way so that everything gets discussed because you have to read the fine print in all of this legislation. It is no sense going crying about it later if you do not thoroughly debate it and read the fine print now. So we want to make sure that has happened.

I think the Government House Leader said earlier in the debate, there were typographical errors in this legislation when we were provided it originally. That is problematic. We have made mistakes here with legislation before. That is why we have the distinct honour, I suppose, of being the only government in the whole Dominion of Canada with our own pulp and paper mill that we expropriated for ourselves. Those sorts of mistakes happen when you hurry along blindly and do not give things ample opportunity for examination, debate, and thoughtful deliberation.

There are all sorts of other examples that we have talked about. I know I have talked many times before about the Act to Amend the Act to Amend the Enduring Powers of Attorney Act, there is Bill 29, and changing the name of the Department of Justice and on and on. It is sort of an endless supply of examples of where a knee-jerk reaction and hurrying along without reading the fine print causes us to have much despair later on, to say nothing of Humber Valley Paving and so on.

**CHAIR:** I am going to ask the member to remember to speak to the bill, please.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, I guess the other thing I wanted to say, Mr. Chair, that I had not said previously was, I wonder about – this government has been in power for that length of time, eleven years and change, and we are only seeing this now. It is such a lengthy period of time to have some sort of parliamentary reform, to have a debate about that, but we are being hurried through this.

You only have to look back at the events of last year, going through three-and-a-half Premiers over that period of time. The business of the government party trying to organize a couple of leadership conventions to ensure there is a Premier in place.

**CHAIR:** I gave the hon. member some leeway. I am asking him to speak to Bill 42.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure. It just slowed things down an awful lot, I guess, Mr. Chair, was my point there.

The other thing we have talked about a bit, and I think it is important to have a fulsome discussion is really the only reason the government has given for pushing this ahead at this time instead of sometime during the previous eleven years that they were in power is the financial situation that we find ourselves in today. I know a number of members have talked about the plunging price of oil but there has not really been a whole lot of emphasis on the fact that we have put a lot of our eggs in one basket. There has not been a whole lot of serious attempt at economic diversification.

A lot of monies have been expended on a lot of things that we could really question and debate the merits of – as I said, Humber Valley Paving being one. The schools with lights on and nobody is home being another. The moose detection systems that –

**CHAIR:** I am going to ask the hon. member to speak to Bill 42 or I am going to ask the member to sit down.

**MR. KIRBY:** I just want to clarify one matter, Mr. Chair, that I know I had a bit of back and forth with the hon. Government House Leader about was the whole issue of the 120 days. He had said to me by social media: Well, that 120 days is in there. There is no question about that. That is included in the – just one second now, if you could bear with me, Mr. Chair. That is included in here on page 4, under 14(2), but there is no question about that.

I think our interest is really ensuring that the government does not change any other statutes, does not sort of forge ahead and change other laws to suit its electoral purposes, and that we

continue on and honour the fixed election date and honour the law that we have in place which says we need to have a general election call within one year of the governing party changing to a new Premier. As I said we have our current Premier who was elected by 381 people at the PC leadership convention last September and we have had a couple of others. We had an interim Premier and an almost Premier, and so on and so forth.

We want to make sure we adhere to that 2015 general election date. There are a lot of people out there who are saying this is just an effort to kick the general election date out another year so that this government can have an opportunity to, I do not know, I guess recover in some way from all of the poor decision making and the subsequent fallout with public opinion that has really come on over the past number of years, at least since the 2011 general election – at least since then.

I will leave it at that for now. I have a lot more to say. I know there is lots more time to get up and talk.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

There were some other points I wanted to make. Of course, that is what Committee is all about, to be able to continue one's ideas and raise points and issues.

Some of what I have to say is about the bill itself and some of it is about comments that have been made by government during the debate around the bill. The Explanatory Notes of bill, I did talk about this in the second reading, but I am doing it for a different reason now.

The bill is amending the Electoral Boundaries Act. It is not a bill about reform of the House of Assembly. It is about the Electoral Boundaries Act which is very, very specific. The amendments would, "require the electoral

boundaries commission to report upon the delimitation of the province into districts in 2015; reduce the number of one-member districts in the province to 38; and make consequential amendments for the purpose of a commission report in 2015." Everything about the bill is about cutting back on the number of districts in the Province and amendments that back up that main goal of the bill.

The bill is not about reform of the House of Assembly. There is going to be an impact on the House of Assembly because there would be fewer people with the cut in districts. The numbers of people in the House of Assembly does not dictate how the House of Assembly is run. I am curious that the government keeps pushing the fact that this is about reform of the House of Assembly, reform of how it operates. The Government House Leader even said it in his comments at the end of second reading.

I want to clarify because I think people are confused out there. I believe we absolutely need the House of Assembly reformed. I absolutely believe that. I am really glad the standing committee has been put in place. That has happened during this process during the week, but we have to be clear that this bill is not about that.

Some of the examples of reform that is needed in the House of Assembly are exactly what we are doing here today, and that is we have gone directly from second reading which has been going on for several hours. It started on Tuesday. We had Private Members' Day yesterday so we did not have it yesterday. We started on Thursday and for many hours the second reading has gone on.

We kept being told throughout second reading that amendments were coming. Then we go directly from second reading into Committee of the Whole. We are going to be presented with amendments and we are going to stay here for several more hours until we do that and there is a vote. That whole process to me is not a good process. It is not a healthy process.

This is one of the examples of why we need standing committees where serious legislation is worked out in the standing committee first, before it comes into the House of Assembly for

second reading. We have the process all wrong in this House of Assembly. That is one example of reform that is needed. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

Even the way our Question Period goes, we need reform there as well. There are so many things that need reform. I absolutely agree with the Premier and with the government with regard to that, but that is not what this bill is about. We have to keep that clear. We have to keep it straight because I think it is being done to confuse people.

It is about cutting the districts. It is about making changes for this year only to our process of the electoral boundaries and the work of the electoral boundaries commission. I think it is extremely important that we make that point of what this bill is really about.

I would like to point out a couple of comments that came from the political scientist I mentioned a few minutes ago, Dr. Russell Williams and some of the points that he has made. It is a warning to us that when boundaries are done, it is the practice everywhere – the key thing that changing boundaries is dependent on is population. That is why the timing of the reviews of the work of an electoral boundaries commission is based on a ten-year framework and tied to the census and information from the census.

The key factor in drawing boundaries has to do with population. It is that very factor that is going to mean if Bill 42 goes ahead, and Bill 42 goes in the direction in which it is being indicated, that rural Newfoundland and Labrador – well not Labrador. Labrador we now know, government has changed its mind and seen the light on that one and those four seats will be protected.

Rural Newfoundland is going to be impacted immensely by this. Not urban, not the Northeast Avalon, not the Greater St. John's area, there may be some changes but they will be minor. Rural Newfoundland is going to be impacted immensely by this and yet, I have heard MHAs from rural Newfoundland here today speaking quite easy about that. Oh, people will understand, people will not mind. I have a feeling they will mind when they find out that

the ratio of rural to urban MHAs is going to change radically because of Bill 42.

That is something I do not understand. The government has so many MHAs from rural Newfoundland, so I do not get it. I do not get either why the Official Opposition, which has so many rural MHAs, is also supporting this now. I do not get it because they are going to be impacted.

As it happens, in our caucus right now three of us are from St. John's. There may be some changes to the districts we represent, but they are not going to be the kind of changes that are going to happen to the rural. I do not understand even how the government is doing this with that as a factor. None of it makes sense to me; absolutely none of it makes sense. It does not make sense to an awful lot of other people either.

I wanted to make that point, Mr. Chair, here at the beginning. I have a lot more to say and I will say it as the evening goes on.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to speak to Bill 42 once again. I cannot think of anywhere I would rather be at 4:51 in the morning than here with all of my colleagues discussing this great piece of legislation.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. LANE:** That is true. My colleague says Church of the Good Shepherd, and I am always pleased to go there as much as I can.

Mr. Chair, I have spoken to this already and I do not want to be too repetitive, but I do want to make a few points on this, just to reiterate some points that have been made. First of all, it is about the timing. When we talk about the timing of this and we are talking about the fact that it was supposed to be done next year, there are a lot of people who would question why is it being done this year when it was supposed to

done next year anyway. Why is it being done when the census information is a year or so away?

It comes down to, really, do we want to do it for the sake of doing it, or do we want to do it right. Now, everybody on this side – well, okay I will not say everyone on this side of the House. Everybody in the Official Opposition, I cannot speak for the other party, but certainly in the Official Opposition I think that we believe, as government members believe, in speaking to our constituents, certainly the vast number of constituents I have spoken to believe that we can have a seat reduction. They would like to see that.

I heard the Leader of the Third Party talk about the fact that we have had these professors and people from outside the Province who have made commentary and so on. I respect their opinion. I have heard their opinions. I have heard what they are saying and I understand their concerns. To some degree, I definitely understand where they are coming from; but the bottom line, though, is that those are not the people that I work for. People from outside the Province and some of these people, they are not my constituents. I have to do what I believe my constituents would like because I am supposed to represent them. I have heard that from other members on the government side as well, that most people want to see that reduction.

Of course now we get into a question of do we do it now, do we do it later. The government has seen fit that they want to do it now. That is their prerogative to put that legislation forward; there is no doubt about that. I do have some concerns in terms of the timing piece, in terms of the census. I have heard a couple of members mention – I believe it was my colleague for Conception Bay South talking about during the by-election that there were streets that did not even exist on the map, houses that did not exist on it because of all the growth.

I know even in Mount Pearl, when you look at Mount Pearl North, Mount Pearl South, well, in Mount Pearl South, the area which I represent, really we do not have that growth. We are kind of boxed in. On the Mount Pearl North side of the district, if you will, up off of Topsail Road, Moffatt Road, that area, we are seeing growth,

and in the Paradise part of the Mount Pearl North district we are seeing growth. The numbers are not reflecting those, because the numbers are like three years old. So I believe, Mr. Chair, that if we were to do it properly, we would have the up-to-date numbers and we would be able to adjust the boundaries accordingly.

Now, on a personal note, in terms of my particular area, it really does not matter to me. I said it the other day, I heard the member talk about a luncheon we were at and as I said at that luncheon, it does not matter to me where the boundary line is to. I do not care if the boundary line is Ruth Avenue or Park Avenue or where it happens to be. For me, if it is Mount Pearl, it is Mount Pearl, and what part, or where the line is drawn, fine with me. If we have to make some adjustments – I know Topsail district, for example, cuts into Mount Pearl, a little piece – I actually live in Topsail district, per se – cuts into about half of Power's Pond. It never was there until the last boundary change. That is when that change occurred. I did not really understand it then, and still do not, to some degree. So, I could see that being changed.

There is also an anomaly. The boundary between Mount Pearl North and South, there is a boundary of Ruth Avenue, but then there is this little anomaly that comes in and Mount Pearl North takes in Second Street and half of Roosevelt Avenue, and four houses on Second Street, and three or four houses on Sunrise. So there is this little piece carved out. That makes no sense. I could see changes being made there.

I could possibly see my district expanding perhaps over and possibly taking in what is known as Brookfield Plains, or maybe part of Southlands, because even though it is in the City of St. John's, the reality of it is that most of the people there, their children are going to school in Mount Pearl and the people there are shopping in Mount Pearl. They are in sports in Mount Pearl and so on. So in terms of communities of interest and so on, I could see a change here.

Regardless of what the change is, which is not for me to decide, the bottom line is I will live with that change, as will everybody else, but we have to be willing to accept change. I think we

have to be willing to accept that fact that the majority of people want to see a reduction.

If we were to do it, like I said, right, I think we would wait. I think we would get the census information, the most up-to-date information. We would follow the legislation, as is already prescribed; but, at the end of the day, from our perspective here now, the government has brought this forward, it is their right to do so, and we have to try to work together to at least make the best of the legislation that is there. Hopefully we can come to some compromises. Hopefully we can bring some amendments forward so that it is the best we can do with the legislation that is put forward.

We are trying to co-operate, as my colleague, I think, for Burgeo – La Poile mentioned. It was never our intention to be obstructionists on all of this.

**MR. KIRBY:** I said that.

**MR. LANE:** Maybe it was my colleague for St. John's North; but, at the end of the day, we just want to make sure that it is done right, that it is done properly. That is why we have proposed some amendments. We are hopeful that some of the amendments – well, certainly we have heard the amendment on Labrador. The government has indicated that that change will be made. We are certainly hoping to see some progress on a couple of the other amendments that we have proposed.

At the end of the day, Mr. Chair, the intent is, obviously, we want to make sure everybody is treated properly, everybody is treated fairly. We want to ensure geography is taken into consideration, communities of interest are taken into consideration, population is taken into consideration and we have districts which are manageable.

Certainly, there is a big difference when it comes to urban areas, like I would represent and a number of my colleagues would, and the rural areas. We have heard those challenges. We have heard challenges around distances, communities of interest, and so on. I do not have those challenges. I could quite easily tack on an additional 2,000 or 3,000 or 4,000 people

or what have you, that would be fine; but in a lot of the rural areas, they have those challenges.

The other thing, of course, is that it is not just the challenges of geography from the perspective of distance, but also the number of communities that you have to deal with. I deal with one municipality right now, just one.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You are lucky.

**MR. LANE:** I am very lucky. The City of Mount Pearl; that is it. Mount Pearl, being an urban area, when it comes to issues around snow clearing and water and sewer and all those types of things, the city takes care of all those issues; whereas in rural areas where the department of highways are involved, they are having to deal with snow clearing issues and road issues and whatever. I do not have any of those –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR (Cross):** Order, please!

The noise level has increased.

**MR. LANE:** Any of the urban MHAs do not have those issues. So, there are differences, and we want to make sure that is recognized and that everybody is treated fairly.

I have a few seconds left and I may speak again, but the other point here that I would like to make is the 120 days. I am not so sure that what needs to be done can be done in 120 days, and I certainly have some concerns about that.

I only have a couple of seconds, so I am going to sit down now, but I will have an opportunity to speak again and I intend on doing so.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I rise again on Bill 42, and of course we are getting into Committee stage here now. I just

wanted to get up here again and reiterate some of the points that I made earlier when it comes to this piece of legislation and how much of a rush this is actually happening in. It seems surprising that – while I was away for part of last week and this week, so I did miss the first part of the debate unfortunately, but of course I was able to come in here with the tail end of things I guess you could say and get back into the swing of things.

Mr. Chair, I just wanted to again talk about the simple fact of why this House of Assembly has to actually look at reducing the number of seats, and if we are not in fact doing a disservice to the people of the Province at the same time when we are seeing government act in a little bit of haste here.

We have heard from a number of speakers here today and tonight and this morning about the fiscal restraints that this Province is facing, and the fiscal situation that it is facing now, and probably for the foreseeable future, according to some of the estimates. We have heard how they have tied it in with the price of oil. That is how we got in this situation. We did not have the foresight to bank away a few dollars and, at the same time, to not become so reliant on the aspect of natural resources that we have become reliant on. We were trapped.

That did not just happen with this government. It happened pretty much since first oil was brought into this Province in 1997 that we got into the nasty habit, both governments, Liberal and Conservative, of taking the money from royalties and sinking it into general revenues and spending it. Again, Mr. Chair, we have nothing to show for it, some people would argue, and it certainly looks that way now.

Now, in the interest of fiscal expediency, I will call it, we have seen that the government came out with the argument that we have to be seen as doing our share when it comes to taking cuts. We have to take it on the chin. In some ways, some people would believe that democracy has suffered. Mr. Chair, from the people who I have talked to and some of the political scientists that you hear out there, we could, in fact, actually be doing ourselves a disservice by making these reductions post-haste.

Mr. Chair, earlier I talked about and I would really like to reiterate the fact of federal representation and what would happen if we heard that the federal Conservatives would end up cutting representation to this Province. There would be such a huge cry from not only this government, but from all sides of the House if we did that. We would be seeing that as being unfair to this Province, number one, and we would be talking about the simple lack of representation, effective representation, if we had to have six federal Members of Parliament. We have basically thirteen representatives now when it comes to Senators and when it comes to federal Members of Parliament.

It tells you right off the bat that there is a pretty good sizable number that our servants in Ottawa are dealing with right now. Some people would argue that this Province should see more representation in the House of Commons. I sincerely believe that that should be the case, that we should have better representation.

Some people would argue in this Province about proportional representation too. So, Mr. Chair, again we have to ask the question that because of the effect of less representation when it comes to the federal end of things, why we do not fight for more representation, for example, and argue the reasons why we have forty-eight seats rather than the fact that government wants to reduce it by ten. It seems that both government and the Official Opposition are coming to some sort of consensus around that number, that we are going to see a reduction of ten people.

Ask the people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador if they are going to have effective representation. It seems like right now that Labrador is going to be secure, and I think everybody in the House has reached a consensus on that part, that Labrador is not going to be affected. That is great; we support that fully. The simple fact is the rest of rural Newfoundland, the Island part of the Province, is going to be affected. So we have the simple fact that thirty-four districts are going to be created on the Island portion of the Province, whereas there would have been forty-four districts on the Island. The Island portion of the Province is going to take that hit.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!



**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. MURPHY:** While we are looking at that particular number, Mr. Chair, you have to ask on behalf of those people in rural Newfoundland, if that is going to be fair to them. Again, we can come back to the simple argument if the same thing had to happen on a federal perspective, if the people in rural Newfoundland would think that it would be fair that we only had six Members of Parliament rather than seven. Again, Mr. Chair, I think we should be having more. We should have a louder voice in Ottawa, the same as the people of rural Newfoundland should have a louder voice in this House of Assembly.

When it comes to the role of MHAs, we have also heard that the role of the MHA has changed and, of course, with the advances of modern technology we have easier access. That does not mean that our work has become lighter. In certain cases, Mr. Chair, I can tell you that in conversations with some of my fellow MHAs, the workload has actually become heavier because it is easier to gain access to your particular Member of the House of Assembly. It is not necessarily true that your workload becomes lighter. Access has improved – that, we know of; but there are other areas of this Province as well that simply does not have as much cellphone services, let alone Internet services. So we still have issues around communication too.

Our responsibility, Mr. Chair, is to advocate on the part of people who cannot do it. Those challenges around advocating, the demographics of which are changing pretty much on a yearly basis – the population in this Province, by the year 2026, we are going to be dealing with an aging population, where we are going to find about 27 per cent or 28 per cent of the population is going to be age sixty-five and over.

Not everybody is into using Facebook. In some cases when it comes to access, some people still like to use the telephone. That is great, but we are going to be having more issues, for example around seniors. So we know that workloads are going to be picking up, particularly when it comes to rural Newfoundland because we know that certainly, this much is true, that with high unemployment, for example. We also have

transient workforces, we have people who are commuting back and forth too, and they leave parents behind. It is something that we have to think about too, and we have to have the commission think about at the same time.

It should be the responsibility as well that we pay attention to what the commission says in those reports. The commission may come out with varied numbers of reasons as to why, for example, the number that government is picking out, thirty-eight, would be a bad number. We have to pay attention to the fact that if the commission comes back and says no you cannot reduce it down to thirty-eight, you have to have, for example, forty-eight seats – and they have the reasons to justify that. We have to pay attention to that.

We know that there are only going to be recommendations. The simple fact is if the commission should come back and say that zero reductions are going to have to be the number that the House of Assembly is going to have to pay attention to, or government is going to have to pay attention to, we have to have the assurance from government at the same time that they would adhere to those numbers.

Mr. Chair, I wanted to start off by saying that. I will have other points to say as the Committee stage goes on. We have to keep in mind that for effective representation less does not necessarily mean more or better representation in this particular case.

I wonder at the same time what government's rush is in doing this. We could wait a few more months; wait until 2016 to ensure that we are going to have the right statistics to go by to do this right. It was the timing in the first place that the commission was going to have to be going around, doing its work anyway.

Mr. Chair, I will thank you for your time at this present time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is 5:10 in the morning. I was thinking that normally when you are coming into the House you are showered and you are pretty fresh as you are going to be going on camera and things like that. We started this a few days ago. Once you get into something like this, Mr. Chair, you do not know how long you are going to be here or when it is going to end. We are losing a few here and there, but I am happy to see that most on my team here still look to be in fine form.

Mr. Chair, for somebody like myself – I think I have had three sittings in the House – it has been quite an experience for me to go through to see democracy at work up close like this, and to sit here and be a part of good, healthy debate. It has been an experience that I will not forget.

On Friday, I was just getting ready to head back to Labrador when the news broke about being called back to the House. We quickly gathered around our own caucus table, and I can tell you since last Friday we have had a lot of meetings as well and wondering what position the majority would be happy with.

I was delighted, Mr. Chair, on Monday morning when our Liberal Leader held a press conference that we all attended. He outlined the three amendments that we would be putting forward. I will just run through the three amendments again for the purpose of the record here. The boundary commission legislation must be amended to state if the commission's work is not completed in 120 days then the existing electoral boundaries will apply for the 2015 general election.

We have had a lot of discussion, Mr. Chair, around the 120 days and the concern about whether or not that happens. I guess the overriding principle here is that if the work – whether it can or cannot be done, we believe that it is in the best interest of the people of the Province to go to the polls in the fixed date that is in place right now of September, 2015. Over the last number of hours we have heard countless members on the other side say they supported that so hopefully that will be the case.

The second amendment we would be proposing, Mr. Chair, would be that the boundary commission not have a prescribed number but

there be a range. Now we do not know where this is going to play out but I am just reiterating.

I would be remiss and I cannot deny, Mr. Chair, the one near and dear to my heart was on the four seats for Labrador. I have to give credit where credit is due. My colleague across the way, the Member for Lake Melville gave a powerfully moving speech tonight. I could see the passion and I share that passion. I am not as passionate at 5:00 a.m. after we have been into this for week, but he talked about unity and he talked about the uniqueness of Labrador. There are some things that no matter where we live in Labrador do bring us all together as a people.

I was pleased to see that sometimes when you stand and you educate people about the diversities and the challenges, that sometimes we can put partisan politics aside, Mr. Chair, and we can look at it for the greater good of the people. I love and I reference it many times – my colleague from Carbonear – Harbour Grace often calls it the people's House. That is why no matter what we do here, whether we are doing it at 5:00 in the afternoon or we are doing it at 5:00 in the morning, we have to constantly remind ourselves that it is the people who we work for. We have to keep in mind what they would want.

I was very touched as I listened to our leader get up and talk about Labrador and the impact that it had on him, and he shared about Burton Winters. The one thing that will stay with me probably most from all of this was when he talked about his trip to Northern Labrador and that lady had said what are you doing here? Have you come from the south to fix our problems in the north?

Mr. Chair, that is why when we get up and we talk about Labrador, we talk about it with so much passion. Sometimes we say words that go a long way in the media just because we are trying to really stress a point that for too long we have had decisions top-down and the people on the ground have not had their say. That is not a healthy democracy.

Even when I look at the district I now represent, Mr. Chair, for many years we were represented by people who were not from the district, people from outside. I could name off a number of them. Eugene Hiscock was a fine man. He

represented us well, but he was not a native to there. He did not nominate my grandfather Ben Powell for the Order of Canada and he was successful. That is one of the things I remember Eugene Hiscock for.

Mr. Chair, as we continue to deliberate, now that we have moved into Committee on this very important act, Bill 42, the electoral boundaries, it is very important for us to get it right. When we look at the 120 days, when we look at the range, I look forward to continuing to hear more debate on that.

Mr. Chair, the four seats in Labrador – furthest from the legislation is the accessibility issue, the geography that has come out very clear over the hours that we have debated. Just a couple of days ago when we were not sure where this was going, I got into the Northern Strategic Plan and former Premier Williams, a powerful man in this House. We all know some of the legacy that he left. I began to read some of the quotes that he had said about Labrador. That is why I was so determined that what is happening here will be wrong, will be unfair if we are to regress Labrador back to where it was forty years ago.

I am going to read a couple of these quotes into the record, Mr. Chair, from that former Premier Williams. He said, “Our government recognizes that Labrador will play a pivotal role in shaping the province’s future and understands that Labrador is a distinct part of the province in its geography, demographics, history, and culture.” These are some of the points that we have been trying to make over the last couple of days. This is why you cannot take districts in this vast Province that we have and carve them up based on population alone. There has to be other considerations given.

He also went on to say, “Government is aware of the importance of consultation and the need to consider the Labrador perspective in provincial decision making and program and service delivery.”

Mr. Chair, that is all we ask for is some say into decisions that are made because we believe the people on the ground have that knowledge. As we move forward further into consultation, into deliberations on this act, Mr. Chair, we are going

to hear a lot more about the importance of the consultation.

After our job here right now is done, when the independent commission goes out it is going to be absolutely vital that they get out and that the people are informed and know where the consultations are being held. That they have a say and there is ample time for them to make presentations and to put it forth. We have the four seats protected in Labrador, but I do have concern provincially that in all of Newfoundland and Labrador this is done right.

Even though Labrador, we know, is very diverse in terms of demographic needs, Mr. Chair, there are a lot of challenges around other parts of the Province as well. There are a lot of rural parts. We are concerned for them. We want to make sure people have their say and that this process is done right as we go forward.

Mr. Chair, a former minister for Labrador said the provincial government and people will work together to advance social and economic development so that residents share an improved quality of life. Mr. Chair, I think I could speak provincially again when I say: Really, isn’t that why we are all here? It is because, provincially, we want to see an improved quality of life for all of the people.

The job of a government is to provide a service to the people, the best service they can. Sometimes they come out with a decision, Mr. Chair, and it is the Opposition’s job to look for the flaws in that, to pick it apart to say let’s go back to the table, let’s revisit this, let’s propose amendments, we can do this better. It is our responsibility to not accept the first thing that is tabled. We have to take it; we have to flesh it out. We have to ensure there is ample time so that at the end of the day the end result of the piece of legislation that gets passed in this House is the best that it can be for the people of the Province who have elected us here.

Mr. Chair, with that, I see my time is gone again on the clock. I am sure I will have an opportunity to stand again and speak to Bill 42.

Thank you.

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to start off first to thank all the extra staff who have been working from probably 8:30 in the morning and continue to work, our Table Officers who really have not had much of a break, the people in the Broadcast Centre, people in Hansard, people who are working really hard. My concern, Mr. Chair, is I am not so sure that it was necessary to do it this way. As a matter of fact, I am absolutely sure it was not necessary to do it this way.

The Minister of Finance – I cannot remember if it was yesterday or the day before – said we make strategic decisions, and we are making decisions that affect us at least twelve months down the road. We are not just looking today but we are looking into the future. We are looking for long-term sustainability about our decisions, and they are tough decisions.

Mr. Chair, the decisions we are making here this morning – it is 5:22 in the morning so far, I do not know when this is going to be wrapped up, but I do know that tough decisions are going to be made and the decisions are about how we conduct our business in this Province, about the governance of our Province. It is a very, very important decision, and here we are at 5:22 in the morning, people are tired, people have worked hard, people are committed to staying here.

The situation we are in now is the creation of the government because not only are they putting the electoral boundaries commission up against the wall with an unrealistic time frame, but they have done this to the House of Assembly as well. This is not the way to make tough decisions. This is not the way to make strategic decisions. This is not the way to make decisions that affect us for years down the road, because the decisions that are made here tonight are for over ten years, eleven years. These are really important decisions, really tough decisions.

I would also like to speak to a few of –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Chair, I would also like to address a few misnomers, a few phrases that have been thrown around here all through the night and into the morning.

Some of our members have talked about we have been here for days, we have been here for the week. In fact, Mr. Chair, on Monday we did not debate this act. Tuesday, we debated the act from about 3:30 in the afternoon to 10:00 in the evening. Wednesday, we did not debate this act. Wednesday we had a private member's motion. Thursday, we started to debate this act. So we have not been in this House debating this act for a week. We have had part of Tuesday and most of Thursday.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Relevance.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Chair, I am talking to the time frame and the important decision that we have to make.

The other misnomer we have been hearing, that people have been talking about, that several members have been talking about is electoral reform. This is not about electoral reform. Bill 42 is not about real electoral reform. Bill 42 is about cutting seats. It is the same as cutting a piece out of a pie. It is not about changing the recipe. It is the same old pie with a piece gone out of it.

Mr. Chair, I just want to establish that, in fact, we have not been a full week debating this, nor is this real electoral reform. We are simply cutting seats. We are taking a piece out of it.

My concern, Mr. Chair, as well, is the time frame. Not only the time frame to look at this very important, very fundamental piece of legislation, but the time frame that will be allocated to the electoral boundaries commission. I think many of us have raised that. It is an impossible task. It is an absolutely impossible task, and the electoral boundaries commission, the work that has to be done is incredibly complex.

We also heard from one of our members who has lived through two different events in the Province where electoral boundaries were changed. He talked about how complex it was. He talked about how difficult it was for communities. He talked about the great divisions that were a result of not doing it properly.

Mr. Chair, we know this is complex. It has to be done properly. Our decision this morning has to be done properly. We have been pushed up against the wall. The electoral boundaries commission will be pushed up against the wall. This is not the way to make strategic, informed decisions that affect how we govern ourselves as a people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The role of the MHA, Mr. Chair, is not just what happens here in this House. The Premier, and many of the members on the other side of the House, government members, have said that what we are talking about is cutting the number of seats in this House, the number of MHAs in this House. I would like to say there is more work to the role of an MHA than what happens in this House. This is a very important role. The work that happens outside this House informs, in fact, what the MHA does inside the House. As an MHA, we do not come here individually. We come as someone who represents the people in our district. It is not simply about cutting the number of bodies that are in this House. It is more than that. It is about our whole governance process.

Mr. Chair, I would like to see real electoral reform. I would like the House of Assembly to look at the issue of proportional representation or ranked ballots. I think we need to look at that. If this Premier is serious about modernizing our way of governing, then we have to look at real reform because that is not what this is.

The other concern I have is when we look at the complex role of the electoral boundaries commission, one of the things in the act is they are required to have at least two public meetings near the end of their process: one in Labrador and one on the Island of Newfoundland.

At those public meetings, first of all, they have to publicly advertise those public meetings for at least ten days. Then what they have to do in those public meetings is they have to present all the maps, all the new names of the new electoral districts. They have to present all their work in two separate public meetings that have to be advertised for ten days. That, in and of itself, is a few weeks work, just that piece, Mr. Chair.

They have to show where the new boundaries are. They have to show maps and the new names. That is not just to present their work; that is for consultation. That means that process does not stop at that meeting. That meeting is for consultation.

When we look at the work that has to be done, it is really complex work. I believe this government is actually setting up the commission to fail. What is so important is not just the actual nuts and bolts of identifying boundaries, identifying maps, but also it is about working with the people of the Province because we cannot afford to have communities divided. We cannot afford that, Mr. Chair. The work must be done in a respectful manner, and I believe that the time frame that has been given for this work actually violates the spirit of what electoral reform is.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I said when I concluded debate in second reading, I was looking forward to the opportunity to get back up again as we got into Committee and to contribute to this important debate of the House. As we talked about this particular piece of legislation, it is interesting how we have been able to ramble all over multiple topics, some of them relevant and some of them not, but it is all a part of a very significant and serious debate around a serious piece of legislation.

One of the things that debates do, debates inform, debates gives us an opportunity as members of this House to share with others our thoughts, gives us a chance to – because this

proceeding is televised and people around the Province are interested in what we are doing here because it affects every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. A debate in the House of Assembly such as this generates other public discussion, a lot of public discussion, I say, Mr. Chair, and that is important because it helps shape our thinking. We should, as legislators, as we debate legislation and as we do the work that we have been asked to do on behalf of the people, be responsive to the comments and wishes and things that we hear from the public and we should inform each other.

There are various points of views that are shared in this House that are opposing, but they are all insightful and they are all important that we express them and it helps shape our thinking. As a result of this kind of healthy debate that we have had on Bill 42, there have been a lot of changes in people's thinking, better understanding of the issue before us, and that is important. That is what democracy is about: having strenuous, rigorous and sometimes lively and spirited debate where opinions are expressed, opposing views are shared, and what we are seeing here tonight is a continuation of that.

One of the things we are also seeing, Mr. Chair, is a recognition by many members in this House that this is a valuable piece of legislation and people of Newfoundland and Labrador are asking for it and we need to respond to our responsibility to ensure that we bring in legislation that is progressive, reflects the wishes of the Province, and reflects the collective views of all of us who are in here sharing in the debate and the discussion.

It is with that view, Mr. Chair, we are now debating clause 1, and I would like to introduce an amendment to clause 1. I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, that clause 1 of the bill be deleted and the following substituted:

“1. Clause 1 of the Bill is deleted and the following substituted:

“1. (1) Section 6 of the Electoral Boundaries Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (1) the following:

“(1.1) For the purpose of the appointment of a commission in 2015, the speaker of the House of Assembly shall appoint the members of the commission not more than 5 days after the appointment of the chairperson under section 3.

“(2) Section 6 of the Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following:

“(3) Notwithstanding subsection (2), the appointments of the members of a commission in 2015 shall lapse after the expiration of 120 days after the appointment of the chairperson under section 3.

“(4) Notwithstanding subsection (3), the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, may by order, extend the time period referred to in subsection (3) for one additional period of not more than 10 days.

“(5) Where a commission appointed for the purpose of preparing a report in 2015 does not report as required by this Act, the failure to report shall not in any way affect the requirement for a general election under an Act of the province, and a general election shall be held in accordance with that legislation.

“(6) Where a commission appointed for the purpose of preparing a report in 2015 lapses without the commission having submitted a report in the time frame required under subsection (3), a commission shall be appointed in the calendar year 2016, and all references in this Act to a requirement of or a consideration by a commission appointed for the purpose of preparing a report in 2015 shall apply, with the necessary changes, to the commission appointed in 2016.”

Mr. Chair, there are a number of key things I want to point out with respect to this amendment. Number one, this is being made by myself as the Minister of Finance. Number two, it has been seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Secondly, Mr. Chair, I want to point out as well this amendment and the language in the amendment clearly speaks to what the Premier and members of our government have been saying since this debate began. It was never our intention, still is not our intention, and never was

our intention to try to use an amendment to this bill or bringing in this bill to amend an act to allow us to extend the normal course of an election in 2015. It was always our intent, still is our intent, to have an election in 2015, and whatever happens with this commission will not change that. The language that is embedded here in this amendment helps strengthen our commitment and points out clearly that now we have it embedded in legislation, it speaks to exactly what we have been saying all along.

So I think, Mr. Chair, this is an important amendment. It reflects the wishes of the people who we have been talking to. It reflects the spirit and the contributions that all of us have made to the debate in this House in recent days. So I would ask, Mr. Chair, that you consider these amendments to determine if they are in order, and I look forward to the continuing debate around the amendment.

**CHAIR:** The Committee is in recess to review the amendment.

### Recess

**CHAIR (Cross):** Order, please!

We recessed to review the amendment, and the amendment is in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a privilege for me to stand here to the amendment that was just proposed by the Minister of Finance. Of course, this amendment makes some significant changes to the original act. In section 1.1 you will see a noticeable difference of this now being a five-day appointment by the chairperson, the commission, "...the House of Assembly shall appoint the members of the commission not more than five days after the appointment of the chairperson...". Typically, this is an extended period of time, but given the tight timeline that the commission would have to work with this amendment – this could all be done in five days.

Of course, the next thing is the lapse. Of course, during most of the debate, and certainly in the House of Assembly this week, the whole idea of this piece of legislation being used is to actually in some way extend an election into 2016. In this particular case, what this amendment does is it allows the commission to lapse after 120 days, after a 120 day period. They shall report within 120 days. This is kind of a sunset clause here where the committee itself will lapse after 120 days.

Section 4 in this allows for one extension period – one only – of ten days. Of course, that would be from the 120 days. There is one extension period that would be allowed that could actually take the commission up to 130 days. Further in the legislation you will understand – as we get through all of this and the pieces, like everything, as they fit together, you will understand the impact of that in some other sections of this new bill.

The election in 2015, as I just mentioned, it says here in section (5) "Where a commission appointed for the purpose of preparing a report in 2015 does not report...". So if the commission does not come back with its report within 120 days, "...a report in 2015 does not report as required by this Act, the failure to report shall not in any way affect the requirement for a general election under an Act of the Province," – of course that refers to our Elections Act or fixed election dates, as most people would know that as – "and a general election shall be held in accordance with that legislation."

What this does, it speaks to the general election in 2015. That any activity and the failure for this commission not to report, they would not be seeking an extension, let's say, in their mandate, indeed they would lapse and the election in 2015, under our current fixed election laws, would continue.

Mr. Chair, with that, I am pleased to second this amendment that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance. I look forward to any further discussion on this particular amendment as the evening progresses.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have to say, I am quite disturbed by the fact that we are getting an amendment like this, getting put in your hand and then having to respond to it in a very short period of time. I will do it, but the amendment, especially part (2) of the amendment, “Section (6) of the Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following:”

What we have is a whole list dealing with this commission that will be set up by Bill 42, which is such a particular situation manipulated by this government that you have to have all of these rules put in. The bottom line is government is finally hearing, which it did not initially, that trying to do this work in 120 days is just about impossible. Now they are trying to say: Well, okay, if it does not happen, what are we going to do?

What you are going to do is if the report cannot be done, if there is not a report in 2015 as required by the act, that means within the 120 days, if that does not happen “...the failure to report shall not in any way affect the requirement for a general election...”. That is fine.

The government is obviously responding to the fact that people have been saying – I have not been one of them, by the way – they did not want to have an election in 2015. I am one person who has not been saying that.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MS MICHAEL:** I have not. No, I have not, and you will not find it anywhere. As a matter of fact, when people have said it to me I said I do not think that is the agenda. I have said it; however, when you go on it says, “Where a commission appointed for the purpose of preparing a report in 2015 lapses without the commission having submitted a report in the time frame required under subsection (3), a

commission shall be appointed in the calendar year 2016”.

Lo and behold, all of a sudden a commission that had been set up, a commission that had done work for 120, maybe 130 days, because you have the allowance there for an extra ten days if needed, this commission of five people, all the work that has been done, et cetera, all of a sudden: Oh, too bad, they did not get the work done. There is no report and we will go and have the general election.

I cannot believe it. I cannot believe that this is what you are doing. There is no way that I can support this amendment. There is no way I can support the bill as it stands. I believe the whole process is wrong. I have said that from the beginning. I am not changing my opinion. This does not help. I am glad to know that government is committed; it is saying definitively that it is committed to the general election. That is important. People need to know that, but this whole thing is so manipulated that I am shocked, I really am.

I am concerned about the fact, and I hope everything is straightforward, I am concerned about the fact that – I do not know when this was written. I assume it has been written sometime over the last twenty-four hours, maybe while we were sitting here in the House finishing second reading. Who knows if everything in it is correct.

We all will remember that a week ago we were given a bill on Saturday that had to be taken back and a typo had to be fixed in it, something that was not serious if it had not been found, but it could be in terms of the meaning. So how do we know that everything in this is absolutely perfect unless we take it, sit down and go through everything – do everything the Department of Justice did with the first bill that got taken back from us.

The speed with which this stuff is happening is really abominable. I cannot understand that people in this room do not think that is serious: the speed with which it is happening. I cannot believe it. You talk about how you care about how the House is being run. You do, do you? Well, if you really care about how the House is



being run, why are we having all of this rammed through?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MS MICHAEL:** It is what is happening.

**CHAIR:** Please address the Chair.

**MS MICHAEL:** It is being rammed through. We are not taking time to be thoughtful. Yet, this is such an important piece of legislation what you are doing and we are not taking time to be thoughtful. It is shocking. It is absolutely shocking.

What you are doing is making sure that people cannot say you do not want to have a general election. Now you have that nailed down. Nobody can accuse you of that. You are obviously recognizing that the time frame is probably not good enough. There is nothing like this in the regular act because there does not need to be anything in it in the regular act because the regular act gives a year for the commission to do its work. They get appointed and they have to have the report by the end of that calendar year.

So, you do not have to have any of this stuff in the regular act. That only points out how much this bill that we are dealing with is a contrived piece of legislation to meet some goal of this government, a goal that they have not named at any time. They have not named what that goal is.

They go back and forth. Sometimes it is because of the deficit and we have to save money. Sometimes it is because we really need to have a smaller House. That is not a reason for doing it. If a real study is done, we may find out that we may not need the forty-eight districts or we may find out we do. We may find out we need more.

I have not had questions answered about what if, when the report comes out, it may not agree with government and it might say we cannot cut the ten seats. What happens then? There is nothing about that, what if you do not like the report that you get.

Mr. Chair, I think I have made my point very, very clearly. I am very upset about it. This does not change for me, the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Here we are, it is three minutes past 6:00 in the morning, and it is very interesting amendments that are put before us. It reminds me a little bit of the French expression, folie à deux, and that is when two separate parties share the same kind of delusion. What happens is that neither of the parties can really see clearly any more. Mr. Chair, I do not quite get it, because basically what this amendment is doing –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please

**MS ROGERS:** – is that many of us have said that the 120-day deadline is not feasible, it is not possible in order to do the work really well, and now this is saying well maybe it is not and if it does not, then we will call the whole thing off. Even though they have done it, we are going to call the whole thing off; or, we will add another ten days, and then if that does not work we will call the whole thing off.

We all have talked about how important this legislation is. We have all talked about how important the House is. We have all talked about how important the role of MHAs is, how important that role is, and here we are – do you know what it reminds me of, Mr. Chair? It reminds me of that quick decision that the Department of Justice is now the Department of Public Safety. Oh, whoops, we are going to reel it back a bit. This is reeling back a bit here as well.

It reminds me of the cuts to the Justice department: the Sheriff's Office, the Crown – we have been presented with a piece of legislation and now there is an awful weird kind

of buffer zone that is being offered. Obviously this has been worked out between the Official Opposition and government and we have heard there was a forewarning, there was a little bit of telegraphing when we had members stand up and talk about compromise and working together. I do believe there is a difference between compromising and being compromised. I truly believe that there is a difference between that.

Also, Mr. Chair, I have been somewhat concerned with the pushing and the pushing and the pushing of Bill 42 in terms of the time frame of what is expected of the electoral boundaries commission that has been done with a certain sense of bravado. Sometimes in our lives we make decisions where we say, damn the torpedoes, we are going to go for it. I do not think we have the moral authority to take something so important as how we are going to govern ourselves and say damn the torpedoes, we are going to go for it. This is not the time to damn the torpedoes and go for it. This is the time to do this properly.

I believe that these proposed amendments are the acknowledgement that the false bravado that has been shown around let us damn the torpedoes and go for it, is really ill-advised. Mr. Chair, I would like to point out again that I do believe that there is a certain air of folie à deux here this evening.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thought this was going to be a great example. We heard so many members here tonight, today, talk about co-operation in the House. We heard them get up at the same time and mention to the Member for St. John's Centre, my fellow party member here, about the great motion yesterday that everybody was working on in the House and then I look at Bill 42, and this is what is really upsetting.

As much as the government here has taken a risk with the people's money and bet on the price of oil, they have also taken risk here. The one

thing that they say right here – and I will go to the Explanatory notes and explain this – they talk about 120 days, and then all of a sudden there is doubt on the part of government here that they can get the work done here in 120 days. So they decide, and the Liberal Opposition also decide, that they are going to go ahead and they are going to give an extra ten days' extension because there is a little bit of doubt there and they are unsure of the step here that they are going to be able to get all the work done in the time required.

That is point number one. I tell you what else I see in this, too. If there is a little bit of doubt here too they are also playing folly with the taxpayers' money when it comes to doing this work, because for all the work that may be done within that 120 or 130 days, if the work is not going to be completed in that particular time we are going to have 120 days' worth of expenses –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. MURPHY:** – 130 days' of expenses on the taxpayers' back. What will we be seeing after that? We will be seeing government and the Liberal Opposition resorting back to the 2016 census and the regular time frame of doing things. They are risking, again, taxpayers' money when it comes to doing this. So, this is not well thought out.

There is no way that government can tell me, or the Liberal Opposition can convince me that this is good on the part of the taxpayer, number one, and it does not do anything to enfranchise me when it comes to working co-operatively on a measure in this House, because this is something that both government and the Liberal Opposition got together on. We just saw this literally a couple of minutes ago when we took the time out, when you called recess for us to look at this amendment.

I think that, really, we have to sit back, and if you talk about reform in this House and if you talk about wanting to rework this House of Assembly and have everybody working together pulling on the one rope, they should act like it. They should be wanting to pull on that rope and include everybody in something like this.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**CHAIR:** Correction.

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry, as amended?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, clause 1, as amended, carried.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**CHAIR:** Division is called.

### Division

**CHAIR:** Are the whips ready?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Ready.

**CHAIR:** All those in favour, please stand.

**CLERK:** Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Dalley, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Wiseman, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Granter, Mr. Littlejohn, Ms Perry, Ms Sullivan, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Russell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms Bennett, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Lane, Mr. Reid, Mr. Hillier, Mr. Flynn, Mr. Crocker, and Mr. Davis.

**CHAIR:** Those opposed.

**CLERK:** Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, Ms Rogers.

**MS MICHAEL:** A point of order.

**CHAIR:** Could we finish the tally first? It is procedure.

**MS MICHAEL:** My point of order is with regard to this.

**CHAIR:** Okay. I recognize the hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi on a point of order.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you.

The Premier came into the room after the vote and the room had been secured. I am questioning his taking part in the vote.

**CHAIR:** I did not see, so how would you rule on (inaudible).

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

**MS MICHAEL:** I am going on the practice in this House. We are all MHAs in this House. Three of us are leaders of parties in this House, but we all have rules we have to abide by. I, myself, have missed out on votes because of not getting here in time. I think we all abide by the same rules. I really do believe that. I am shocked by what was just said, he is the Premier. Yes, he is the Premier, all the more reason why

he should understand why we keep the rules in the House.

**CHAIR:** Okay, I will take it under advisement.

The hon. the Government House Leader, speaking to the point of order?

**MR. KING:** Yes.

Mr. Chair, I have no knowledge of whether the Premier came in late to the House or not. He was late to his seat, but government wishes not to make a fuss of this. If the member is convinced that the Premier came in late and somehow forced himself into the House, we are prepared to withdraw the Premier's vote on this particular one.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

In response, while the vote was being called I did see the Premier to the side. I was not sure if he had entered late or not at that point.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) going to withdraw the vote.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**CLERK:** Mr. Chair, the ayes, thirty-nine; the nays, three.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

Clause 2.

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again it is a real pleasure to stand and to be able to speak to Bill 42, and more particularly, clause 2 of this bill. This is an area where once again, as I commented earlier, there has been lots of discussion around the appropriate number of seats that exists in the Province, what might be an appropriate allocation, and how might we go about determining a quotient to be used in a calculation and the distribution of the seats.

Mr. Chair, I am proposing an amendment to clause 2. I would move, seconded by the

Member for St. Barbe, that clause 2 of the bill be deleted and the following substituted:

“Clause 2 of the Bill is deleted and the following substituted:

“2. Section 13 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

“13.(1) In the calendar year 2015 the commission shall divide the province into 40 proposed one-member districts.

“2) In the calendar year beginning in 2026, and every 10 calendar years after that, the commission shall, as soon as is convenient after March 31, divide the province into 40 proposed one-member districts.

“3) The commission shall determine a quotient for each proposed district by dividing the total population of the province by the number 39.

“4) Notwithstanding subsection (3), for the purpose of the commission's report in 2015, the commission shall determine a quotient for each proposed district by dividing the total population of the province by the number 36.

“5) For the purpose of establishing a quotient under subsection (3), the population of the province shall be taken as in the latest census figures available under the Statistics Act (Canada) on March 31 of the calendar year in which the quotient is being established, irrespective of when those census figures were actually taken.

“6) For the purpose of establishing the quotient under subsection (4), the population of the province shall be taken as in the latest census figures available under the Statistics Act (Canada) when the quotient is being established, irrespective of when those census figures were actually taken.

“7) For the purpose of the commission's report in 2015, the total population of the province shall, for the purpose of subsection (4), be considered not to include that portion of the total population living within the area of the province comprising Labrador.

“(8) For the purpose of subsection (3), the total population of the province shall be considered not to include that portion of the total population living within the area of the province comprising the district proposed by the commission under section 15(4).”

Again, Mr. Chair, the most significant piece of this amendment is the number of seats. We have had a lot of debate, a lot of discussion in this House of what might be an appropriate number of seats. There have been lots of suggestions about a number. There have been lots of suggestions about how we arrive at a number.

Again, this healthy debate that we have had in recent days has helped to inform a lot of our thinking. That is why we are able to stand here today and to make a motion, as I am introducing a motion, to amend clause 2, and it has been seconded by colleague in the House of Assembly, the Member for St. Barbe, to get a reflection of how people are able to come together in the House with turning their heads to something that is important for the people of the Province, sharing thoughts, sharing ideas, and recognizing that there will always be spirited debate where there is difference of opinion on a variety of fronts.

Recognizing, in the end, that we are all here for one single purpose, and that is to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is important that we never ever lose sight of that. As long as we are here in this House that is our role and that is our responsibility. As we share thoughts and ideas, we learn from each other and respond to those new insights we have.

That is what we are seeing here in this particular amendment, a reflection of informed views, informed thinking. Now we are seeing an amendment to more accurately reflect what we believe are the wishes of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the wishes as expressed by the people who they elected to come to this House and represent them in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Chair, I look forward to some continued comment on clause 2. I do thank you for the opportunity to make this amendment.

**CHAIR (Littlejohn):** Thank you.

The House will now be in recess to consider the said amendment.

This House is in recess.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The amendment is in order.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think when we came here on Monday – and not all of us were that thrilled to come here on Monday, finding out on Friday that it is January and you are going to be going back into the House. It is great to come to the House, but it is okay to have some notice too.

This is important legislation. It is important legislation that needed and needs to be passed on a timely basis so that the electorate, our constituents, the voters, the people we serve have the best chance to benefit from the change this year – this year being the election year.

This amendment creates forty electoral seats in the Province. The proposal, with the bill as it came, was for thirty-eight. The Leader of the Opposition had previously floated the idea of forty seats plus or minus somewhere in that range. Over the course of the week, even though we had been debating – and maybe because we had been debating, maybe because all parties have been putting forth points of view, it became possible for the Opposition and the government to co-operate and collaborate, maybe more closely than we have in some bills in the past, but certainly this is an important one.

The way that the seat distribution is calculated really provides a benefit to the voters and the taxpayers in general. If you look at the forty seats, the calculation is done initially by using forty and going back to the number thirty-nine, which means that you black out the population North of Lake Melville district because that is a district which is almost exclusively an Aboriginal district.

Furthermore, as we go forward, to calculate the size and the number of the population in each seat in the Province, only the population outside of Labrador is calculated, is taken into consideration and divided by thirty-six. This means that if you look at the population outside of Labrador, the figure that the Premier was looking for, more or less 13,500 people per district is met almost precisely, almost exactly on the bubble. It is exactly what was floated.

At the same time, we do not use the population in Labrador for that calculation because all of those seats have smaller population. It would unnecessarily and unfairly skew the population. The mathematics works out precisely.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. J. BENNETT:** The flexibility is also there for the commission, with the two extra seats, to have additional flexibility to be able to most appropriately and reasonably assign boundaries for electoral districts that would be in keeping with communities of interest, communities in general. So it provides additional flexibility by virtue of more numbers and it also provides a calculation and a method to take into the future.

Those are my comments, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, on the amendment.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, the heart of this amendment is changing the proposed number of cuts from thirty-eight to forty. The amendment deals with that, number one, and then the impact on the determination of how to assign a quotient for the districts affected by another decision of the government, which is that they now will protect the four seats in Labrador. So, what is here also has to reflect the different mathematical things that are going on because of that as well. As far as I can tell, all of that is correct.

I do not have the time to sit down and go over every line and make sure there are no typos or that there is not a wrong letter in there or

anything of that nature. I certainly do not have the time to do that. I hope there is not, as there was with the first draft of the bill that we received.

The crux of the whole thing is the issue of assigning the number. I have said before, and I will say it again, that we have not been given a rationale by the government for the number that they originally have and the new number. Obviously, the new number comes from discussions that went on between the Official Opposition and the government, of which we were not part. You have come up together with this number. We have no rationale for it.

I read an extremely excellent document yesterday, Wednesday, since we are still in Thursday here in the House, done by one of the political scientists here in Newfoundland and Labrador which gave in great detail the process through which one goes to try to assign, to figure out how to cut seats. It is a very scientific explanation and he looked at a number of different scenarios as how one determines that, and the lowest number he came up with was forty-four and with other scenarios the number went higher. I think the biggest cut he could see was maybe one district.

Obviously, this kind of analysis has not been looked at by either the Official Opposition or the government. Nobody has told us how you have come up with the number. Based on the scientific analysis that I have looked at, I am quite, not only willing to believe, I am convinced there are ways to determine the cuts that are scientific, and that has not been used. There is no way I am going to be able to support a number that has been plucked out of mid-air, because it has been, and changing it to forty does not change that position for me. I still continue to be shocked by the fact that we are dealing with this issue, that it is being dealt with in such a fast way.

When you consider we met with the Premier last Friday, the House leaders, the party leaders met with the Premier last Friday, and last Friday the bill was not even written. We were told the people in the Department of Justice were working on it and sometime on the weekend we would get it. We did ask, I did: If we don't get it until Sunday night what is going to happen?

The Premier said: Well, I will be flexible, if you do not get it until Sunday night – but as it turned out we got it Saturday morning, but even as we met with the Premier the bill had not even been finalized. Now we are getting amendments that have been done under great stress and pressure, and on the fly as well. So, all of that is very disturbing.

People are observing it, and they see the speed with which all of this has been done. We know from experience in this House that when there is speed errors happen. There are two issues for me. One is that, and the other is the thing of just plucking a number and saying that is going to be it, without coming up in a scientific way with that number. As I said, there are scientific ways to do that. There are people in this Province with the knowledge and the ability to do that, who could work with government in doing that if they do not have anybody in house to do it.

Once again, this is not something I can support. I am hoping there will be – maybe there will be an amendment that will come that I will support, but nothing like this is going to change my position on the bill. I disagree with the whole premise that you can just take a number without giving a rationale for where that number is coming from.

That is my position, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt –

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to echo the words of the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi, but I would also like to add to that. I believe this is incredible, shabby, patchwork that is happening here in this House right now. It is disrespectful I think of our democratic process to come up with – and some of this legislation was being written in the hallways this evening and during the morning.

As the Minister of Finance has said, these are important decisions that affect us for years down

the road. We all know that. I am sure we all know that. I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better than this. This has been done on the fly. It is scrambling, it is trying to patchwork stuff together. We are not making a quilt here. We are making decisions on the governance of our Province and how we live together as a people.

I believe the agendas of the two compromising parties are probably different, but that is theirs to work out. I do not believe this process that is unraveling before us right now in fact is a respectful process that honours the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of –

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am just adding a couple of more thoughts when it comes to this particular amendment. Mr. Chair, I still have not heard a clear answer from government or the Liberal Opposition on what happens if the commission goes against what you want.

You are putting in a fixed number here of forty people to serve in the House of Assembly. If the commission comes back and says no, you are going to need more than that, what is government going to do? What is the Opposition going to do? Are they going to still stick with that forty number, or are they going to go by the numbers of the commission?

We know the commission, when it makes its recommendations, are just that, recommendations. In other words, government does not have to abide by that. That is disconcerting in itself too.

In echoing also the thoughts of the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi and my friend from St. John's Centre, I will add that particular thought. Hopefully, government might be able to answer that one, but for some reason I doubt it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Just one or two more points I would like to make. I certainly concur with the comments that have been made by my colleagues. The speed with which we are dealing with this right now, we know it is being dictated by the fact that government made a very speedy decision at some point over Christmas I guess, or just after – when I do not know – to go ahead with a piece of legislation that last weekend they had not yet finished. It is not that they had the legislation done and thought about it. It was not even finished.

They made a decision to do it knowing they have to call a general election by September 25. That is the date. They know they have to do that. They know the timeline they are under. Now they have tried to deal with that in the amendment we voted against in clause 1; but, given that, even though they put that in, they still obviously want a report.

They still obviously want the commission to be able to report to them, but they have themselves in this box, and I do not understand the box. I do not understand why that decision, which was such a tremendous decision, was not something that was brought to the House when we were in the House in the fall. This is what I do not understand. What went on between mid-December and last week that all of a sudden made the Premier think that this was a wise thing to do? I just do not get it.

**CHAIR:** I have given the member fair leeway. I am going to ask her to speak to the amendment as presented, please.

**MS MICHAEL:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will just make a couple of more comments with regard to this, just one more.

It is the point about population. I want to come back to population. I think this section does recognize the importance of population. It is population that obviously is the driving criteria in doing the divisions and doing the districts, and it is for that reason that I think the commission has to do work first around that in

order to be able to fix the quotient and decide on cuts – look at the various scenarios.

It is not a matter of doing – and I know some people have been out there doing maps and they have sent them around to all of us; we have all received them. Some of the maps that people have done they did it to sort of show what it could look like if we went with thirty-eight districts, for example. What they did was do district boundaries and look at what it could look like if you did those boundaries that way. That is not the way the cuts should be made, and that is not the way the districts should be done.

It has to be done by a population. I know that work has not been done. That is the work that the commission would be assigned to do and based on the analysis that they do, then you come up with a number. I cannot say that often enough and I just need to impress once again that same thing.

So, once again, even though I have used it before, I am going to use it again, it is the cart before the horse. It is giving them no leeway. It is telling them this is what it is. I want to echo what the Member for St. John's East said. What happens if the commission does their report within 120 or 130 days – does their work, and their conclusion is this is impossible, that it is not good to do this, then what are you going to do? That is not in your amendment. It is not in your amendment, what happens if you do not like the report, what happens if they tell you that it cannot be done the way that you want to do it. That is not in your amendment.

I ask the Premier what his answer to that is. He has been asked by the Member for St. John's East, and I am asking him it as well, what is your answer to that – that the commission is being bound by the number forty. If we have the people with the expertise on that commission, then I know we will have good people on that commission.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** If we have those good people on that commission and they do their work well and if that work reflects any of the stuff that I



have been reading and studying, then they very well could say this is just not reasonable; it just cannot be done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I still have a couple of more thoughts when it comes to this particular piece of legislation. I keep thinking about growth. Government likes to talk about economic growth. We know that in the Northeast region of the Avalon Peninsula, Mr. Chair, under the possibility of redistribution, maybe there are going to be seats removed from the Northeastern region, and maybe there is not. We have not seen the work of a commission yet. God only knows they are going to have a lot of considerations.

I wanted to touch on a couple of other considerations that they are probably going to have at the same time, especially when it comes to growth. I will talk about St. John's East for a second directly, when it comes to being affected by this number. One proposal I saw actually had the removal of St. John's East as a possibility. Here is a reason why they should not.

The City of St. John's has already approved several projects within the city that show there is going to be growth, there is going to be occupancy of more houses and that sort of thing, particularly as well, condominium developments. We are not talking about areas here where we have areas where there they are actually going to be building houses, but areas where they are going to be building up.

The population of the district right now is about 11,700 people roughly, but we are talking about the possibility of that population growing. At the same time we already know what is happening in the Northeast region, particularly the city, the Northeast regions of the Avalon. Think about it; Stavanger Drive, Airport Heights, Kenmount Terrace, Paradise, CBS, Ferryland, Bay Bulls, Witless Bay are all showing immense growth.

We are talking about Galway. I think that there is a possibility here – when the former Premier who owns the development was talking about the possibility of moving the Town of Gander in there. We could be talking about the addition of another seat into the House of Assembly as a result of that.

We are talking about the immense possibilities for growth that is going to be happening here that the commission is obviously going to have to pay attention to. At the same time, if we are talking about growth and the addition of seats in the Northeast Avalon, which the commission is going to have to consider, then obviously the other seats that they are talking about reducing having to come from somewhere.

There is only one answer for that. It cannot be Labrador because we have already stepped up and we have protected Labrador. The other answer has to be rural Newfoundland. In that we are doing a disservice, Mr. Chair. I say the current number of districts represents an institutional protection for rural Newfoundland and Labrador and that needs to be protected.

There is some accommodation within the one person, one vote premise in the act that takes into account the realities of a rural district. Mr. Chair, I think that is a very important point that we have to remember. We have a responsibility to represent our people. We also have the responsibility if the commission is going to be going by the potential growth in various regions and if they are going to consider such factors as a growing economy, these are important factors that they are also going to have to remember – that the Northeast Avalon, all of a sudden, is going to have a disparity of seats there and there is going to be less power in rural Newfoundland and less representation.

I ask the government to consider that as a very important factor when it comes to this piece of legislation. I think for the commission it is going to be a very important body of work when it comes to the commission and what they are going to be presenting to government, and the question still goes to government on this particular matter – that if they find out that there is going to be a disparity in representation there, number one, and if they find out that they are going to actually have to present a proposal to

government, that they are going to have to be more seats rather than the forty that the government and the Liberal Opposition are proposing, are they prepared to stand by the number that is going to be presented in the report from the commission?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt clause 2?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** I am sorry – is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt clause 2, as amended?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, clause 2, as amended, carried.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**CHAIR:** Division is called.

### Division

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Are the whips ready?

**CHAIR:** All those in favour of clause 2 as amended, please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Davis, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Dalley, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Wiseman, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Ms Perry, Ms Sullivan, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Russell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms Cathy Bennett, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Lane, Mr. Hillier, Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Crocker.

**CHAIR:** All those against, please rise.

**CLERK:** Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, and Ms Rogers.

Mr. Chair, the ayes thirty-nine; the nays three.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

Clause 3.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to stand here again and speak to Bill 42. Looking at clause 3 which deals with section 14, there are a couple of different aspects of this particular section. The section that I want to pay close attention to right now is 14(2).

In the bill as presented, it states, "Not more than 120 days after the appointment of a chairperson for the purpose of the commission's report in 2105, and before the end of the calendar year 2026 and before the end of every 10 calendar years after that, the commission shall submit the report referred to in subsection (1) to the minister, who shall

“(a) submit a copy immediately to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council; and

“(b) lay a copy before the Legislature within 15 days after the report is submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council if the Legislature is then sitting, and, if it is not, then within 15 days after the beginning of the next session.”

That particular clause, we had some concern about. As we already know, there was an amendment presented to deal with the 120 days. We do have an amendment here that deals with section 14(2)(b).

As you can see there, we know that within the 120 days the report will be submitted, presented to the minister, who presents it to Cabinet. Then Cabinet has to lay it here in the House within fifteen days, and if the House is not sitting, within fifteen days after the beginning of the next session. That was a concern to us, because if the House was not sitting then theoretically this report could sit there. We would not be able to debate it, we would not be able to get it in the House, and it could present delays which are not wanted by anybody.

The amendment we have here will ensure that the report must be tabled in the House of Assembly within ten days of the report being delivered to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Basically, what this is doing, the reading of this amendment will show that there are 120 days but if it goes above that there is still leeway there, but the max will be 130 days. Any day after the 120 will come into the ten days that Cabinet has to present this, and it will ensure that it has to come here into the House. It eliminates some of the concern we have.

At this point I would like to propose an amendment, which will be seconded by the Government House Leader, that “Clause 3 of the Bill is amended by deleting the proposed paragraph 14(2)(b) and substituting the following:

“(b) lay a copy before the Legislature within 10 days after the report is submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.”

**CHAIR:** The House will take a short recess to consider the said amendment.

This House stands in recess.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The amendment is in order.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to just have a couple of comments to this section. As my colleague, the mover of the motion, the House Leader on the Opposition side said, section 14(2) is intended to obviously place time frames and restrictions around two components: one is the time frame with which the commission is to submit its report which is firm at 120 days; and the second, prior to the amendment of course, gives fifteen days for the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which in laymen’s terms is the Cabinet, to submit the report to the House upon receipt of it.

The intent here is to expedite the process. All of us are concerned, the Premier and government, as well as the Opposition Leader and his caucus about ensuring we get through the process in a timely manner. We have an election coming up in September. It is a timeline we intend to meet.

What we have done here is essentially reduced the time frame with which Cabinet will have the opportunity to present the report to the House of Assembly. Instead of having a fifteen-day window to present the report, we will simply reduce it back to ten, as I said, to demonstrate that we are all committed here, those who are supporting this amendment, on the government side and the Official Opposition side – committed to expediting the process so that the 120 day time frame is met or in fact in under. In no more than ten days Cabinet will have the report shared and we can start the debate on moving the legislative changes forward.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John’s Centre.

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, one of the biggest stresses in my life is being on time. I have to work so hard to be on time and I have to work so hard to meet time deadlines. I do it, but I really have to work hard at it.

I want to do my reality check again in terms of a time frame. We know that the House of Assembly debate is this week which will bring us to –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Relevance.

**MS ROGERS:** This is very relevant, Mr. Chair. It is January 22; possibly on January 23 we will be finishing this debate.

The chief justice has thirty days to appoint the Chair of the commission, but government says that it can be done by January 30. That is compressing that time frame. On February 6 the other members of the commission are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Assembly, which is no more than five days after the Chair is in place.

Mr. Chair, I am getting to the time frame because that is what we are talking about here with this ten-day time frame. Let us see because some of the concerns that have been talked about, particularly from this side of the House – is it possible to do all this work and meet the election deadline for the fixed election date of September 25.

Then, by May 31, the commission submits their report to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, 120 days, four months after the Chair is in place. What has been said is that by this amendment, by reducing the number of days from fifteen to ten will shorten the time; however, in a previous amendment, it allows for an extra ten days on top of 120, just in case.

So, in fact, Mr. Chair, what happens is that these ten days are not an extra ten days because it can be taken up by the ten days that the commission, in fact, is extended. It is a zero sum game. In fact, there is no extra time. That still brings us close to the end of June.

Then what happens is Elections Newfoundland and Labrador says they absolutely have to have four months in order to do the work that they have to do to get ready for an election, which means that brings us beyond the date of September 25, which is the last legal date to drop the writ.

In fact, Mr. Chair, it looks like we are gaining five days by shortening the time from fifteen –

**CHAIR:** No props, please.

**MS ROGERS:** Yes, thank you very much.

That is the amendment, Mr. Chair. It looks like, in fact, we are gaining five days by shortening the time from fifteen days to ten days. However, we have added ten days – government and the Opposition have added ten days onto the possibility of the work of the commission if they need it, which means we are even shorter by five days. So, although this looks like an attempt to shorten the process, the process is still extended by the initial proposal.

Again, Mr. Chair, I can only say that this type of legislation at 7:17 in the morning that is patch work, that is being written out in hallways is totally unacceptable. It is unacceptable to the people. It does not honour or respect the people of –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS ROGERS:** – Newfoundland and Labrador, nor does it honour or respect our democratic process in this House of Assembly. I think it is shameful, it is shoddy, and it is unprofessional. I am absolutely opposed to this kind of work being done at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am speaking to section 3, including the amendment. This has to do with the report the

commission will be making and the recommendations that they have to make. I want to speak to subsection 14(1)(a), which is they will be making recommendations concerning “the division of the province into the number of one-member districts determined under section 13”. That number now has been voted on and that number is forty.

They are being expected to make recommendations, with regard to the division, into forty. I have said this before but because it is so important I have to say it again, it is quite possible these people will discover that trying to do that is impossible in the sense that it would not be the best way to do it. They could do it, but even in doing the boundaries, even in trying to get the population they need in each of the districts becomes impossible. What do they do?

There is nothing in here about them being able to let government know that ahead of time. If they do the report and the report says our recommendation is not to do a division into forty, what does the government do with that? They have to be open for that possibility. They have to be open to the possibility that the commission could start its work and determine that it cannot be done. I guess in that case they could all resign and government just go ahead and we have our general election and things start in 2016, as it should be happening anyway because that is what our legislation says.

Government is contriving this new piece of legislation because nobody has proven, nobody has given any evidence as to why this is demanded at this time. I have heard the Premier say it has to happen, it needed to happen. I have heard the Government House Leader say it, but they have not given us any proof as to why, none whatsoever.

When you look at the whole thing of – and I am concentrating on the number. When you look at Bill 42, and you look at existing legislation, and every MHA in this House received what I am going to be referring to from Professor Russell Williams. It was an excellent analysis that he did of redistribution, and the redistribution that would happen –

**CHAIR:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but we are discussing clause 3, and

clause 3 talks about having to come before the Legislature within ten days after the report is submitted to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Can we stick to the clause, please, hon. member?

**MS MICHAEL:** Well, I am. That they have to report with regard to the division of the Province into the number of one-member districts determined –

**CHAIR:** No. The amendment is ten days.

**MS MICHAEL:** Oh, you want just the amendment. Okay.

**CHAIR:** The amendment just talks about ten days, hon. member, thank you.

**MS MICHAEL:** Okay, then I will speak to the other, because I want to speak to the whole clause. We have not had a chance to speak to the whole clause because the amendment was brought in by the first reader. I have to understand that I am going to be able to speak to the whole clause.

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, as long as that is the case.

Within ten days, I think that my colleague actually through that time frame shows that this – I can understand having time to lay a copy before the Legislature within ten days after the report is submitted, but how does that affect the time frame that she was talking about? How does that affect the time frame with regard to the pressure the government is under with regard to calling the general election? How does it affect the time frame with regard to the work that has to be done by Elections Newfoundland and Labrador? So, I think that is a question.

It would not be a question, and it is not a question under our act, because there we are dealing with what I would consider to be a normal situation, a commission put together under our act with a calendar year to do their work. Here we have a contrived piece of legislation to do something that this government wants, and for some reason the Official Opposition wants to do along with them, and

they have all these timelines. They are in a box, and so it makes it quite different.

Having this ten days under the act would be fine. Having it here is adding extra time to the whole process. It speaks to the difficult situation this government has created and that it is finding itself in. I think it is going to get more difficult as this gets played out.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt clause 3 as amended?

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

**MS MICHAEL:** I do want to speak to the clause. Thank you.

I am assuming it has to happen now if I am going to do that.

**CHAIR:** As amended.

**MS MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you.

What I was talking about was the whole thing of the number of districts, the forty, and what will happen under Bill 42 as analyzed by Dr. Russell Williams. As I said, I have never met him, probably many of us have not met him. I think he is showing himself as a public servant. The professors at the university, I have heard many of them define themselves as public servants. They realize their expertise. What they have to offer is a responsibility for them to do it. I think Dr. Williams has shown that, by taking the time

to put these tables together to show us what we are dealing with.

What he has shown – I am not going to do the comparison because it gets too complicated, but the overall analysis is that what he has shown is that under Bill 42 – and this is very telling – in rural Newfoundland we would have an inordinate number of districts. Now this is our forty-eight districts right now. We would have an inordinate number of those districts that are way below the quotient, even more so than 25 per cent, which is our magic number.

For example, if Bill 42 goes into place you would have – this will be what the commission would have to work with, and he has worked this out. You would have, for example, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune would be over 46 per cent below the quotient for the population of the district. The Straits – White Bay North would be 39.6 per cent below the quotient. St. Barbe would be 38.6 per cent below the quotient. The Isles of Notre Dame would be 38.3 per cent below the quotient; Bonavista North, 38.2 per cent; Bonavista South, 38 per cent; Trinity – Bay de Verde, 37 per cent; and it goes on. What it is showing is that you would have a large number of rural districts that are going to be so far below the quotient that they are the districts which are going to have to be brought together.

In some cases just taking two of the districts that would be natural ones – and one of the ones he looks at is the Northern Peninsula and looking at St. Barbe and The Straits – White Bay North – they would be over the quotient when you put the two of them together. They are under it by a large margin and over it when you put them together.

What he is showing here – and it is something I referred to earlier and it should concern the people in this room and it should concern the people of rural Newfoundland – is that it is absolutely definite that rural Newfoundland is going to be hit immensely by this. This is his big concern. He is pointing it out; I am not going to say it is his concern. He has done the analysis and he did it as a service to all of us. He sent this to all of us so that we would have information to help us in making the decision. I think what it shows is that the difficulty in doing the work is immense, as we have already said.

The other thing I want to look at again is with regard to the number and with regard to implications. I look at my own District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, a district that in 2006 had a population of 11,718 and in 2011, 8,137 electors.

Using the old census numbers is going to be very misleading. We think about places outside St. John's that are growing, but if you take a place like my District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, the map that is here from, I think it is 2008 – if you take that map and look at it today, there is going to be a big difference. There are going to be new streets everywhere, especially in the most eastern end of my district. Just Pleasantville alone has new apartment buildings and new condos. The whole thing is growing.

Using the 2011 census numbers is going to be very problematic in making the decisions. So again, it is a very serious problem that the commission is going to be faced with. Even myself, as the MHA, I have been going around physically door-to-door to all these new buildings and new houses in my district just to try to get a sense of who is living there now. Well, that stuff is not going to be documented.

This is the kind of stuff that has not been thought about, it seems to me. It has not been thought about because what is happening has been driven by an agenda that the government has, and they have not put any thought into the real implications of what they are doing.

We have been told by people like Dr. Williams, and by others that – and again, he sent this to every single one of us, his concern that he really believes this is absolutely problematic. He encouraged us to review the information. He believes that the legislation is drastic and has not been fully thought through, and yet we have had no sense that anybody in government even has read his e-mail or studied the work that he did for us here in this House of Assembly. I do not know what else to say, Mr. Chair, to try to get this government and the Official Opposition to understand what they are doing by passing this piece of legislation today.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt –

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to stand again and speak to the amendment that lays a copy before the Legislature within ten days after the report is submitted to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I am just wondering, Mr. Chair, if in fact the report is later than what has been laid out and that pushes the date? Will that be a problem with the time frame that is being proposed here?

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt clause 3, as amended?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**CHAIR:** Division is called.

Summon the members.

### Division

**CHAIR:** Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour of clause 3 as amended, please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Davis, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Dalley, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Wiseman, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Ms Perry, Ms Sullivan, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Russell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. McGrath,

Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Joyce, Ms Bennett, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Lane, Mr. Reid, Mr. Hillier, Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Crocker.

**CHAIR:** All those against clause 3 as amended, please rise.

**CLERK:** Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, and Ms Rogers.

Mr. Chair, the 'ayes' forty-one; the 'nays' three.

**CHAIR:** Clause 3 carries as amended.

On motion, clause 3, as amended, carried.

**CHAIR:** Clause 4.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to stand and move the following amendment in Committee of the Whole House. I am submitting an amendment to Bill 42, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act.

"1. Clause 4 of the Bill is deleted and the following substituted:

"4. (1) Paragraph 15(3)(a) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

"(a) the community of interests of the residents of those communities of the province that are not connected by road; or

"(2) Section 15 of the Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (3) the following:

"(3.1) Notwithstanding subsections (1) to (3), for the purpose of the commission's report in 2015, the commission may recommend the creation of not more than 2 districts on the Island portion of the province with a population that departs from the quotient established under section 13 and the deviation permitted under subsection (3) where that departure, in the opinion of the commission, is warranted on the

basis of those considerations referred to in subsection (3).

"(3) Subsection 15(6) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted".

I am especially pleased to offer the next amendment, "(6) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, for the purpose of the commission's report in 2015, the commission shall divide the Labrador portion of the province into 4 proposed districts, including the district referred to in subsection (4), and shall, in describing the boundaries of those districts, consider their historical boundaries."

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS DEMPSTER:** Basically, Mr. Chair, what this amendment is saying – and I am sorry I am a little bit sleep deprived. This amendment is seconded by my hon. colleague the Member for Lake Melville.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS DEMPSTER:** Basically, Mr. Chair, what this amendment is saying is that everybody's vote is equal and notwithstanding certain circumstances, there will be allowances for 10 per cent deviation either way. In some circumstances it may require a deviation of 25 per cent either way.

Mr. Chair, this amendment goes even further. It gives the commission two districts of their choice on the Island portion of the Province. In this circumstance they can exceed more than 25 per cent variance for two districts only.

Mr. Chair, when the commission sets about the important work that it is to do, I have no doubt that they will choose who the two districts are to be after they have considered a number of factors, like accessibility, culture, distance from services, et cetera. So I am happy to submit that amendment.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The House will recess to consider the amendment.

The House is now in recess.



Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The amendment is in order.

The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. RUSSELL:** Thanks everybody.

Mr. Chair, I would just like to say, specifically in line with the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair concerning the four districts in Labrador.

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, if the hon. minister – it was my mistake. There is time remaining for the previous speaker.

**MR. RUSSELL:** Not a problem, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and I apologize.

**MS DEMPSTER:** No problem. We have been all going for about twenty-five hours, so no worries.

I will be very brief. I just want to say this is an historic day I think for Labrador. I am so pleased. Since last Friday, our own caucus, under the leadership of Dwight Ball, we have had many, many meetings. The way we worked together –

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, hon. member.

I remind you, you cannot mention names of leaders, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MS DEMPSTER:** I apologize.

Either way, Mr. Chair, we have had a number of days here debating and it has been a good outcome. We heard some wonderful stories about Labrador. This would have been very regressive for Labrador. It would have taken us back forty years, Mr. Chair. I am happy the members opposite acknowledged that. They listened to us, they heard us. They heard many of the challenges that were there a long time

ago, many of them still exist in terms of accessibility and transportation issues.

It is a wonderful day. I am happy to be sitting next to my colleague here who was a driving force as well, and our Deputy House Leader from the Bay of Islands. From day one, I ought to give credit where credit is due, he was vehemently speaking out in support of Labrador and I commend him for that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS DEMPSTER:** I want to thank my two Labrador members across the way, the Member for Lake Melville and for Lab West for doing your piece, working within your party on the other side. I think this is a win-win for everyone.

Given the hour of the morning, I will not go any further.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Once again, the hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. RUSSELL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, concerning the four districts in Labrador, Mr. Chair, I would like to say that I stand here today with a very full Labradorian heart. I would like to personally thank Premier Paul Davis and Deputy Premier Steve Kent for their support on this matter. I also want to extend my thanks to our Cabinet, our caucus, for their willingness to engage in continued open dialogue about the validation of the distinct and unique characteristics of all four districts in Labrador.

To the people of Labrador, Mr. Chair, I say, the calls, the e-mails, the letters, the chats about the need to maintain and protect these four districts was heard by me, and that message was received with crystal clarity. I just want to say and reaffirm to the people who know me and trust me that this was my number one priority when dealing with this bill on the floor.

Today, their trust in me, their trust in my colleague from Labrador West, their combined trust in the Member for Torngat Mountains and the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair has led to a very, very productive level of co-operation between government and the Opposition party. I would like to say, Mr. Chair, this co-operation has resulted in a situation that leads to serving the best interests of Labrador, her residents and their representation in this House of Assembly.

So with that, I would like to say thank you very much to everybody involved. With that, and the late hour, I will take my seat.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** I am going to defer to the Member for Torngat Mountains (inaudible).

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Leader of the Third Party for allocating this time.

Mr. Chair, I do have a few comments, and my comments will be relative to the seats in Labrador, the four seats. If we could go back, if I could be permitted to do so, Mr. Chair, to last Friday or Thursday when this whole issue came forward. It was just a couple of days later that we got to look at the proposed legislation.

I was actually quite disturbed when I looked at section 15(6) that was to be repealed, and that there was the threat of Labrador losing seats or a seat. The warning bells went off as they did with, I am assuming, the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, the Member for Labrador West, my colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and our whole Liberal caucus.

In the comments I have heard since then, we have heard commentary from everyone in this hon. House. For the most part, there was a lot of discussion on Labrador. Going back again to the

frustration that I felt, I talked to my colleague the Member for Lake Melville outside of the Chambers and we had some really heated discussions. I was desperate. I did not want to see this seat disappear, or seats disappear. My frustration was focused on my colleagues from Labrador on the government side, Mr. Chair, because I wanted to know where they stood. I did not want them to make the wrong decision. I did not want them to support Labrador getting a number of seats reduced.

Our party made a clear and concise decision that we did not want the seats in Labrador reduced either. Every one of my colleagues – and I have to give them credit – stood up and they backed that decision. There are times when the most important thing is taking credit, but I think in this issue when you have the frustration and the passion, and to see the government go from repealing section 15(6) and putting it back on the table, and to hear my colleagues both on this side of the House and my colleagues on the government side to be able to speak in terms of supporting it.

I questioned that because all week I could not get a response from them. I wanted them to respond. I wanted them to support the decision to leave the number of seats in Labrador the same. I was glad to hear them – because it is still called today, even though it has been twenty-five hours – come out and support this. Mr. Chair, had I known they would have supported this on Monday, I would have asked for six seats.

Mr. Chair, I would just like to talk about my own district. Once I saw the legislation the first thing that entered my mind is that everything was on the table. I entertained notions of going for the nomination and maybe running in Lake Melville – Torngat Mountains. I entertained the notion of my colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair running for Cartwright – Lake Melville. All these thoughts were going through everybody's mind, ours as well.

In the discussions I have heard around the table – and they are wise words of wisdom from my hon. colleague from Bay of Islands and the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South who stood up today and talked about what could happen, the impacts, the feelings, and the

emotion that is going to come by implementing legislation such as this. There have been a lot of amendments put forward and we support them. The question is if it had gone another way and we saw what the government brought in – I will say last Monday for the sake of starting a week, Mr. Chair – with a majority government. I have no qualms in saying that my reasoning is that they want to hold on to the next election. I will say that.

Mr. Chair, with a majority government they could have done that. They could have said we are going with thirty-eight seats. This is the direct route we are going to give to the commission. We want this to happen. We do not need you. We have a majority government.

Mr. Chair, we would have objected all the way. Maybe the only defence we would have had is that we would have taken a position and maybe we would have had the backing of the people of the Province. Maybe we would not have. To see some agreement reached, there are different scenarios for ideal situations given whichever side of this hon. Legislature we sit on. I do not think I need to define that.

Back to my district, the one I represent now; come election time everything is on the table as the Premier has referred to so many times. The only time it is really on the table is election time. There are no guarantees.

I then learned, Mr. Chair, the only seat in the Province that was actually safe was the District of Torngat Mountains. I could have been selfish. I could have said, well, all I have to worry about is who I have to run against in the next election. I could have taken that stand, but I chose not to, because I come from a region that is over twice the size of Newfoundland with less than half the population, less than a quarter of the population. It has four seats and it has four seats for a reason.

After hearing what everyone has had to say as this legislation unfolded, as we saw amendments come forward and as we addressed them, we saw a change. There was a little bit of give and there was a little bit of take, but we saw a change. That is the reason we are up here now going on twenty-six or twenty-seven hours, I do not know anymore. There is a sense of

resolution. Something is being resolved. Will it be the perfect scenario? No. No one will ever admit to that. Are we cautious? You better believe we are cautious.

It was good to finally see an amendment put forward that is accepted. I know over the last five days of debate there were reasoned amendments that were submitted that were not accepted, Mr. Chair.

What I would like to say in my closing remarks is that we can all steal the thunder for this. We can all go out and say we did it, we did it, we did it. As true Labradorians – and I am sure my colleagues on the other side will attest to it – what is the sense of bragging or taking credit? We are just thankful that the job got done.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I am pleased to be able to stand on this amendment when it comes to Labrador as we have heard over the past few days. I think every speaker in the House made some comment relating to Labrador.

Labrador is unique, it is distinct. To some of us, for certain for four in the House, I can say it is very special. With my colleague from Lake Melville, my colleagues in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and Torngat Mountains, I am glad that I was a part of making this decision. I am glad we have the result we have. I certainly thank all colleagues in the House of Assembly for being a part of that.

I cannot go without saying that it was very contentious on this side of the House also. Although, as I said when I spoke earlier this evening, neither myself nor the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs were out kicking and screaming, but I can guarantee you, internally we were in kicking and screaming. We were to the rest of the Cabinet and to the rest of the caucus stating our case. Fortunately, we were heard. I thank the Premier for that and his

Cabinet. I certainly thank all of my caucus colleagues.

I am a man of few words, believe it or not, but when I do have something to say I do not mind saying it. In the past week there were a few times when I had a few things to say. I said to one of my colleagues, today was probably the most frustrating day in my political career. I did not know what was going to happen and I knew what was on the line.

To have the result we have, I am really pleased. To be here and be able to stand here tonight – or this morning now I guess it is – and say that we have achieved something, but most importantly we have achieved it together as a full Legislature, I am proud to be a part of that.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party and the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think it is important that I stand. I am not putting myself in the same group as my colleagues from Labrador. Because of our position on the bill itself – which I have been very clear on and I think my colleagues share it, they were pretty clear on it as well. I think it is really important to stand and say one of the things that did disturb me most is what was in the original bill with regard to the seats in Labrador.

I want to say, first of all, that we are voting for this amendment. The amendment is so important. The bill itself I do not think should be going forward. If this government is going to put this bill forward, then I think what they have done is really important because they have not undone the work that has been a struggle for decades in this Province. It would have been shameful if that had stayed in as it was. I am glad all of us together can say we are voting for this amendment together. I want to say that.

Just on a personal note – some people know this; I think the Member for Torngat Mountains

certainly does – for at least thirty years I have been, in different ways, involved in solidarity with the Aboriginal groups in Labrador. I think that was the reason why I found it so hard when I thought that government would not take a stand, because it has been an ongoing struggle, and the struggle is not over, and I think the Member for Torngat Mountains has sort of referred to that. So I am proud that we can all together now vote for this amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the amendment?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt clause 4, as amended?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 4, as amended, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 5 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 5 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:** An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act.

**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 with amendments?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill with amendments, carried.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**CHAIR:** Did someone call division?

Division is called.

Summon the members.

### Division

**CHAIR:** Are the whips ready?

All those in favour of Bill 42 with amendments, please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Davis, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Dalley, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Wiseman, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Ms Perry, Ms Sullivan, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Russell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Joyce, Ms Bennett, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Lane, Mr. Reid, Mr. Hillier, Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Crocker.

**CHAIR:** All those against Bill 42 with amendments, please rise.

**CLERK:** Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, and Ms Rogers.

Mr. Chair, the ayes: forty; the nays: three.

**CHAIR:** Bill 42 is passed with amendments.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. the Premier, that the Committee rise and report Bill 42 as amended.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 42 as amended.

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, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Port de Grave and Chair of Committee.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked me to report Bill 42 with amendments.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have carried Bill 42 with amendments.

When shall the report be received?

**MR. KING:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

**MR. SPEAKER:** When shall the said bill be read a third time?

**MR. KING:** Now.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. the Premier, that the amendments be now read the first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the amendments 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.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** First reading of amendments.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, that the amendments be now read the second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the amendments 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.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** Second reading of amendments.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank all members for their participation in the debate. As we know we have gone through a fair degree of debate here over the last number of hours to cover second reading and Committee. The House rules of course permit us to do two steps in one day.

What I would like to ask if there would be leave of the House while we are all here fully engaged in the debate and despite our differences – I think there is consensus on wanting to move the process forward. I would ask if the House would give me leave to move to third reading so that we could close debate on this bill and get the process started as early as later today.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** It would certainly be a pleasure to give leave.

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Yes, granting leave, Mr. Speaker.

It would be unconscionable of all of us, I think, to spend the money to bring people back on Monday. I do not think we should do that.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank my colleagues, the Opposition House Leader and in particular the Leader of the Third Party since her party in particular was against the bill as a whole, but providing leave of the House to move forward. I thank you, Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House, I would like to call from the Order Paper Bill 42.

It is moved by me, seconded by the Premier, that the said bill be now read the third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 42 be now read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 42 be now read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act. (Bill 42)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Bill 42 has now been read a third time, and it is ordered that the bill do pass and that its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 42)

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

The Leader of the Third Party is standing on a – ?

**MS MICHAEL:** Did I not stand when I should have? I just wanted to make a closing comment to the bill.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The bill is now passed.

**MS MICHAEL:** Okay, all right.

**MR. SPEAKER:** With leave of the House, you can make a closing comment.

Does the member have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much to the House.

I am sorry about that. I guess we are all tired, so I missed when I should have stood.

This has been a long, hard couple of days that we have been involved in this discussion. I think that we as a party have made it very clear why we could not support the bill. After everything that I heard, I heard nothing to change that opinion. I wish this bill had not been brought to the House. I wish we could have used our democratic process through our Electoral Boundaries Commission Act to do things the way I think they should be done.

I am glad that during this week the Standing Orders Committee has been set up, and that all parties, of course, are part of the Standing Orders Committee. What I referred to during the process over the last several hours, I want to say again. I think we have a lot to do with regard to the House and how the House is ran. I am taking on good faith that we all want to do that, and I am ready to work on the Standing Orders Committee to do that.

I do not believe changing the number of districts is part of the renewal of our House and how the House runs, but I am encouraged that the Premier has seen that as a priority. I am certainly ready to go into that process with the

same energy that I came into this week, because I think it is extremely important.

I think we are still young, believe it or not. It was only 1949, it is still not that long ago. I think we are still young as a Legislature, and we had years when this was not run the way a Legislature should be ran. I think a lot of us know the history of things that went on in the House of Assembly after 1949. I think there is a lot of history in this country and in the parliamentary system that we can learn from.

I really look forward to being involved as a member of our party. We all know I will not be the leader of our party after March 7, but I will still be in the caucus. Hopefully, the new leader will agree with my continuing to be on the Standing Orders. As long as I am at it, I want to put energy into really working together with everybody to see if we can really openly look at the things that need to change in this House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition with leave.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Leave.

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just be a few minutes. I just want to actually reach out and thank the staff again for doing a tremendous job this week. It has been a short session, but down in Hansard, the people in the Web cast and certainly our Table Officers, but in particular, too, this evening the people who are in the Department of Justice who have been working through all of this process with us tonight.

It has been one of my first experiences in the House of Assembly where we have seen such co-operation on an evening like this to get some work done. Something that we all believe in and supported now for quite some time. We wish the commission all our best as they get out and do the job engaging with people through public consultations across the Province in the hope of

getting the seat reductions in place for the next provincial election.

Also, this week, of course, we saw something that has really been somewhat unprecedented here in the House of Assembly. On Wednesday, we saw the all-party committee on mental health. That was an important initiative I believe, and maybe sets the tone for some new direction within the House of Assembly, a spirit of co-operation. All-party committees can actually do, I believe, some significant work in the future and make some significant changes in the way government and this Legislature works in the future.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to seeing the work and the accomplishments. We wish the commission great success.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier with leave.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Leave.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for Bay of Islands for the humour this early in the morning or this late at night, depending on how you look at it.

Mr. Speaker, I will just take a few moments to thank all members of the House for the work that has been accomplished here in this House this week. I think it is an excellent example of how we can come together. We can exchange our viewpoints, and in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we are able to achieve consensus and bring forward a piece of legislation that we have all agreed is important to bring forward for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite has already mentioned as well, I would like to acknowledge the work of the staff in the House of Assembly. It is a big production in order to operate the House behind the scenes here.

I would also like to mention, as well, officials in the Department of Justice and Public Safety who



have been here throughout the night and have worked with us to ensure that amendments could be completed in a time that would work for all parties, and that we could continue the progress and make the progress that we have made overnight in passing Bill 42.

I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition and his party for their co-operation as well over the last couple of days. We have had many conversations – probably more than we have ever had. We had some good discussion, frank and fair discussion, and it resulted in the production of what I believe to be a good piece of legislation that will be good for Newfoundland and Labrador for years to come.

There is still work to do, and we have also included amendments and the legislation deals with ensuring that work gets done accurately and it gets done effectively. It allows for an independent process to do the work throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to assess all of the circumstances, have a consultative process, and then to result in a recommendation to us in a timely manner that will allow for this legislation to take effect before the election this fall in 2015.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, if I just may, just very briefly as well, I would like to acknowledge a couple of members on this side. The Minister of Finance and the Government House Leader, who, the three of us have worked very closely together for this side of the House, with the support of our caucus to make sure this happened.

I also want to acknowledge all four members who represent Labrador today in the House: the Member for Torngat Mountains, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, the Member for Labrador West, and also the Member for Lake Melville – all who have done a tremendous job in representing the views and interests of Labradorians. I commend them for the work that they have done throughout the last number of days and ensuring that all of the interests of Labrador, the uniqueness of Labrador, was on top of mind for all those here in the House of Assembly.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will conclude my remarks and again thank everyone in the House of Assembly.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It has been a long debate.

At this time, I move, seconded by my colleague for Bay of Islands, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Government House Leader, your motion to adjourn is to adjourn to the call of the Chair, am I understanding?

**MR. KING:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the motion is to adjourn the House to the call of the Chair.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

On motion, the House adjourned to the call of the Chair.