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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start today's proceedings, I'd like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery a former Member of the House of Assembly, Mr. Ross Wiseman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements today are from the Member for the District of Conception Bay South, St. George's – Humber, St. John's Centre, Baie Verte – Green Bay, Lewisporte – Twillingate and Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

The hon. the Member for the District of Conception Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to honour a Royal Air Force Veteran, Mr. Harold (Jack) Gillingham from Kelligrews who passed away December 30 at the age of 95.

In 1939, Mr. Gillingham joined the Royal Air Force serving as a wireless operator with the 149 Squadron. On March 1, 1943, during a raid against Berlin, his bomber was attacked by a night fighter as it headed home. The Skipper decided the fuel was too low and gave the order to bail out over Dieppe, France.

Jack became a prisoner of war and was sent off to Lamsdorf, Poland. He survived the infamous long march from January 1945 until liberation on Good Friday, March 30.

In 1965, Jack became an electrical inspector with Newfoundland Power and worked with the rural electrification program and the development of the provincial power grid.

Jack was active in the Royal Canadian Legion, Wesley United Church and the Air Force

Association of Canada. He was a modest man who learned by hard experience the value of life's simple pleasures.

Jack is survived by his wife and eight children.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in honouring an extraordinary Newfoundlander and Labradorian, Mr. Jack Gillingham.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the opportunity to attend one of a series of community gatherings around Bay St. George this month called Sharing the Memories.

These community gatherings are designed to provide an opportunity to share information and stories by St. George's Mi'kmaq soldiers. In this commemorative project, photos, stories and other documents are being gathered and shared in various ways, such as public meetings, as well as through the Facebook page: Bay St. George Mi'kmaq in World Wars.

The upcoming meetings will be held at the following locations from 2-4 in the afternoon: the Seniors' Club in Barachois Brook on Saturday, April 16; the Royal Canadian Legion in St. Georges on Sunday, April 17; the Royal Canadian Legion in Stephenville on Saturday, April 23; the Twilight Seniors' Club in Port au Port on Sunday, April 24; and the 50 Plus Club in Stephenville Crossing on Saturday, April 30. A meeting will also be held at the Bay St. George Culture Circle in St. Georges on April 29 from 7-9 in the evening.

I thank the individuals and groups involved in this project and encourage people to participate in this commemorative project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Something is bubbling in St. John's Centre. I am thrilled to announce the rebirth of *A Woman's Almanac: Voices from Newfoundland and Labrador*.

The Women's Almanac, started in 1987 by feminist writer and activist Marian Frances White, each year celebrated the lives of 12 women from across the province who were changing our world. Many of us used the Almanac year after year, each month reading stories of incredible Newfoundland and Labrador women. After 10 successful years, Marian put the Almanac to bed.

With Marian's blessing, the St. John's Status of Women Council, in partnership with award-winning Breakwater Books, is relaunching this great gift to the history of women's activism. With an intro by Marian, the first edition features prominent feminist activists writing about women who have inspired them. Writers include Zita Cobb writing about midwives of Fogo Island; Lisa Moore on performer Anahareo Doelle; Elizabeth Penashue on her sister Rose Gregoire; Kaberi Sarma on activist Yamuna Kutty; Amelia Curran on champion of the arts Edith Goodridge; and Mary Shortall on labour activist Nancy Riche. What a fantastic feminist revival!

Honourable Members can pre-order copies now at Breakwater. A fall launch is to come. Stay tuned. Bravo, Jenny Wright and team!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: I rise today to recognize a true Newfoundland and Labrador hero: Tommy Ricketts. A native of Middle Arm, White Bay, Tommy travelled to St. John's in 1916 to enlist. He claimed to be 18 years old when he, in fact, he was only 15.

On October 14, 1918, in the final weeks of the war, as the Allied forces were advancing in Ledegem, Belgium, Private Ricketts voluntarily

doubled back under enemy fire to retrieve ammunition. On his return, he used his Lewis gun and his terrifically accurate aim to drive the Germans to abandon their heavy weapons and race to a nearby farmhouse.

Ricketts's actions that day saved the lives of many and advanced his platoon's position. They also resulted in the capture of four field guns, four machine guns and eight prisoners. Private Ricketts was just 17.

For his valour and devotion to duty, he received the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for bravery. A century later, Tommy Ricketts remains a household name in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Beaumont-Hamel this year, I ask all Members in his hon. House to join me in commemorating a true hero of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate.

MR. D. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize two minor hockey associations in my district: the Twillingate/New World Island Combines and the Lewisporte area Seahawks. During the Easter break, both associations participated in hockey tournaments throughout the province and were host to tournaments in their respective communities.

All teams played well, with most winning medals in their division. The Lewisporte Seahawks Atoms won gold; Pee Wee, bronze; Bantam, gold, and Midgets, silver. While the Twillingate/New World Island Combines Atom division also won gold; Pee Wee, gold; and Midget, bronze. The 12 and under and 20 and under female teams each won bronze at their provincial tournaments.

I would also like to recognize four young ladies who represented our province at the Bantam Female Atlantic Championships: Morgan Ball

and Jayden Oake of Lewisporte, and Brianna Blake and Olivia Rogers of Twillingate.

Hockey is not all about winning. It's about being physically active, demonstrating sportsmanship, respect, discipline, having fun and making new friends. I am proud to say that these teams demonstrated this and represented their communities with pride.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Twillingate/New World Island and the Lewisporte Minor Hockey Associations for their success throughout the year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House and inform Members of the efforts made by the residents of Change Islands. With a population of just over 250 people, they have organized an emergency response team. The team's volunteer mission is to provide medical assistance to people on Change Islands.

Susan Porter, Wendy Ledrew, Marion Adams and Denise Hoffe are trained in advanced first aid. Together and sometimes aided by the Volunteer Fire Department, they respond to the emergency medical needs of the residents. Being a small isolated community, each time they respond, it's usually a family member or friend. These fabulous four ladies have from time to time endangered their own lives to help others.

The emergency response team ride in the back of the ambulance, helping and offering comfort while waiting for the ferry to transport their patients to the mainland.

I encourage them to keep up their efforts and I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me and show our gratitude to them for their heroic community pride and effort.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The Commemoration of the First World War and the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel

MR. SPEAKER: Today for Honour 100, we have the Member for the District of Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I will now read into the record the following 43 names of those who lost their lives in the First World War in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve, the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine, or the Royal Flying Corps. They will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: Henry Dunn, Edmond Lawrence Dunphy, John Dunphy, John Joseph Dunphy, John Joseph Dunphy, Thomas P. Dunphy, William Dunphy, Fred Roy Durnford, John Thomas Dwyer, Martin Dwyer, William Dyer, William Gerrard Dyer, Gilbert Dyke, John Walter Dyke, Patrick Eagan, George Earle, William Eason, Alfred Eavis, Morgan Eavis, Thomas Eavis, John Ebbs, Frederick Ernest Ebsary, Hubert Edgar Ebsary, Samuel Joseph Ebsary, Alonzo Eddy, John Francis Edens, Leonard A. Edens, Albert Edgar, Charles LeGallais Edgar, Edwin Edgar, Edward Francis Edgecombe, Silas Edgecombe, Samuel R. Edney, Alphonsus J. Edwards, Hubert Frank Edwards, John Charles Edwards, George Elliott, John Elliott, William Elliott, William Skeffington Elliott, Ambrose Ellis, John Joseph Ellis and James Ellsworth.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: I rise in this hon. House today to speak on the interim report by EY, received April 8 and released online today with the Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee's report to the end of December 2015, received April 11.

We said in December we would open the books on the Muskrat Falls Project and we are fulfilling that commitment. As shareholders and as taxpayers, we are entitled to up-to-date and accurate information. The interim report is being made available to ensure transparency on the project.

The interim report informs government about the current material risks and issues that are not reflected in the September 2015 forecast, and provides recommendations to improve project governance. The overall conclusion of the EY review is that the September 2015 forecast is not reasonable.

We take EY's recommendations seriously and it is our full intention to action them all including strengthening project governance and expanding oversight which we expect to have completed by the end of May.

Schedule pressures and expected cost increases on the Muskrat Falls Project concern us all. The project is now being reforecast for cost and schedule.

We expect that the schedule and cost reforecast for the Labrador Island Transmission Link and the Labrador Transmission Asset will be completed by the end of May.

One component, the powerhouse and intake as part of the Muskrat Falls Generation, is significantly behind schedule. Nalcor is in discussions with Astaldi, the contractor. We will not have the final cost and schedule reforecast until these discussions have concluded.

EY will assess the reasonableness of the revised forecast and will then present us with a final report following their review.

We certainly recognize and appreciate the hard work of the Newfoundland and Labrador residents and companies working on the project. We will be diligent in our actions and we will make the right decisions on behalf of the people of this province. We will ensure the project is managed effectively within budget from here on.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Our caucus looks forward to the interim work completed by the million dollar report from Ernest Young, along with the December 2015 oversight reports released today.

I also note that the first quarter of 2016, that report is also due. I guess we will expect to see that in the very near future.

I'm a little confused and concerned in regard to comments by the minister in the last couple of days when she indicated that she wasn't sure when the oversight report for the quarter in December would be done. That was only yesterday she was quoted. Today we are here in the House releasing that report.

In addition, she indicated on the Ernest and Young million dollar report that it would be a few weeks away. So I'm not sure what dialogue is going on between the minister and officials, the oversight committee and the clerk. Obviously, we need to have an intergraded approach here as we have done in the past to provide that oversight and to be fully engaged in what's happening with this project.

I give her advice to stay engaged, get up to date in what's happening with the reports.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Here we are coming up to two days' time to a deficit budget that will be a direct result of paying billions of dollars into the Muskrat Falls Project which is now behind schedule and over budget. Now we will not know the new forecast of cost and time frame

for this project until the end of May, long after the budget is released.

If government had done what was suggested in the beginning, and this government can now do it, and had an external body doing the oversight of Muskrat Falls we probably would have had our information in a much more timely manner than is now the case.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to announce to the House today that nominations for the Council of the Federation Literacy Award are now open. This award recognizes outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy by individuals and by stakeholder groups.

Since 2005, the Council of the Federation Literacy Award has been awarded in provinces and territories right across the entire country. Created by Canada's premiers, the award recognizes the valuable contributions of Canadians in the field of literacy.

Any person or group can nominate an individual for this award. Nominees must be a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador for our own award, be 18 years of age or older, and have participated in an adult literacy, workplace literacy or Adult Basic Education program for at least six months. The deadline for the nomination of an individual is May 30.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government remains committed to adult literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that is why I am very happy to say that our government is committed to the development of an Adult Literacy Strategy to guide our future investments in literacy promotion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we are all aware literacy skills are the essential building block for the development of a vibrant society and economy.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous life I had the honour of representing this province on the national board for the Movement for Canadian Literacy and we were very proud when the Canadian federation was established in 2003. The 13 premiers had identified a number of key initiatives of importance to Canadians, one of which was literacy.

Mr. Speaker, we should absolutely acknowledge our province's great strides in improving literacy rates. However, we must be mindful of the many challenges that still exist and continue to work towards constant improvements. The Council of the Federation Literacy Award does just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This award is a wonderful way to honour one recipient each year who has overcome the odds and worked hard to achieve his or her literacy and education goals. The odds against people are great in a province where more than half of adults still have low literacy scores according to international surveys.

I urge the minister to keep government's promise for an Adult Literacy Strategy that we're still waiting for, as well as to bring ABE back to the public colleges for maximum access and support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while March 20 marked the first day of spring throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, recent weather conditions indicate that safe driving practices must remain top of mind.

The winter maintenance season for the Department of Transportation and Works runs until mid-April or early May each year, depending on conditions.

The men and women of the department are dedicated to making the province's roads safe when challenging conditions like snow, ice and water exist. Safe driving is everyone's responsibility, and government, along with police agencies, the insurance industry, municipalities and media continue to raise awareness and promote safe driving practices.

My hon. colleagues and residents of the province are also no doubt aware that at this time of year, due to repeated freezing and thawing, potholes are prevalent. While crews are working hard to address potholes as quickly as possible we should all adjust our driving habits, regardless of the season, to road and weather conditions.

It is extremely important that motorists make informed travel decisions, because conditions can change or deteriorate quickly. Research conditions before you drive and if you decide to travel, reduce speeds and be aware of your surroundings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I commend the work of staff

within TW. They work very diligently on trying to keep ahead of this. As we know, our climate is what it is. Potholes are occurring on a daily basis so I want to commend the work they do to keep our roads in decent condition, Mr. Speaker.

One note though, this is more like a driver beware statement to be quite honest, because I read it and I was like, okay, very good. Fair enough. I do hope that in the evidence-based decision making potholes are given top priority.

I encourage people to drive safely and drive to the conditions. I do hope that our roads are kept in a reasonable condition. On a final point, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention to the minister, there's a really bad pothole under the Fowler's Road overpass in CBS, so heads-up.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Safe driving practices must always be top priority with the motoring public. What about those drivers who depend on the Conche Road currently rated Atlantic Canada's worst?

The minister says it's important that motorists make informed travel decisions. For those who live and work in Conche, there is no choice.

So I ask the minister: What is his recommendation for Conche school bus drivers if the NL English-speaking district closes the school and forces children over that road twice a day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today we're seeing news reports that may explain why the federal government is stalling on their promise to reactivate the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre. Today, we're hearing that the federal government is considering privatizing critical search and rescue services that are important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially those who earn a living on our waters.

I ask the Premier: Is he aware of this? Does he support the concept of the federal government privatizing search and rescue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Member opposite, what we've seen in the discussions we've had with our federal colleagues is that fact they have a commitment to improving services in Newfoundland and Labrador. As part of that commitment, there will be an ongoing dialogue which will include Members on this side of the House.

As our federal colleagues have said many times, their primary objective here in all of this is to improve the services in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's a commitment they've made and that's a commitment of the discussion we will continue to have with our federal colleagues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds to me like the Premier was aware the federal government was considering privatizing

search and rescue – very important search and rescue services for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the Premier: If you were aware of it, when did you first become aware of this? What is your position on this? Do you support the concept and the federal government considering privatizing search and rescue services?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As with any discussion and any decision you have to make, what you do is you look at whatever options you have available to you. With the evidence you have, you make the best decision you can.

Right now, with the federal government, I'm sure they are considering a number of options. What they have said to me in the discussions we had – their objective is to improve search and rescue services to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's the commitment they've made. That's the commitment we will base our discussions on as we continue the discussion and the communication we are having with our federal colleagues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier again: Can you tell us when you became aware they were considering privatizing search and rescue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I became aware of a number of issues around providing services within Newfoundland and Labrador, the discussions we would have with our federal colleagues, it is not a discussion I have had on an individual basis with the

federal members about privatization of search and rescue.

The discussion we've had is about improvements in services in Newfoundland and Labrador. When they're prepared to take those discussions to a final forum, it is then we would intervene and have our say into those discussions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the response from the Premier.

I ask the Premier: Are you satisfied that privatizing search and rescue is a way that can provide a safe and effective service for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of my colleagues just gave me this here. This comes from Municipal Affairs on May 8, 2013. What I would see here, this would come from your provincial government, I would say, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to read it in; I would just provide this document that we have here as well as part of a pilot project that the prior government had talked then about privatization of services within Newfoundland and Labrador. This is obviously a concept that they would have supported.

Right now, the main objective for me and this government is to make sure that we bring improvements to search and rescue in Newfoundland and Labrador because on their watch, what they saw is closure of those very offices.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you I was not intending to go down a history road today or a blame game once again today. We've heard lots of that from Members opposite. If you want to open the door for that, I will certainly do that. According to this news article today, the federal government did consider in 2011 privatizing certain services, military-based services. But apparently, according to the article, the idea didn't get very far because there was public outcry over the concept of privatizing any of these services.

One of the people who led that outcry was the current federal minister who's responsible for military procurement who is the Newfoundland and Labrador minister in the federal government, Minister Judy Foote, who was appalled. She said she was appalled by the government's notice to companies and the government that were exploring privatization of search and rescue.

The question is very simple for the Member opposite: Do you support the concept of privatizing search and rescue? Do you believe it can provide an effective and safe service for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? That is what I ask the Premier; it is very simple.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, if I was the Leader of the Opposition, as he stood here in his place today, I would not want to talk about the history. I would not want to talk about the blame because what they failed to do is accept the responsibility. Any time we raised this, any time we raised the issue around their actions, the work that they have done when they were in government, I would be ashamed of that too. That is what got is in the position we are today.

What I am focused on is improving search and rescue services for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The federal colleagues have already said that they want to do that. It is something that we will support. The concept around evidence based, how they proceed with that, it is then when we get into making those final decisions – I would ask the Members

opposite if they were so concerned about search and rescue in our province, what happened? What did they say about the closure? Why did they stand and watch their federal colleagues take away and close down those very services in our province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite, the Premier, is quite well aware they weren't our friends in Ottawa in the last government, I can tell you that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: So, Mr. Speaker, they weren't friends of Newfoundland and Labrador either. We quickly know, and the people of the province quickly know that the government opposite is quickly becoming known to not answer questions and play the blame game. That's what they're going to do.

I ask the Premier, the Liberal promise of a stronger tomorrow, one they touted during the election campaign, we noticed quickly changed to a message of blame and doom and gloom. The people have been waiting to hear the Liberal's plan for quite some time; waiting to hear their vision for months.

Yesterday, the Premier stated that tough decisions will be made this Thursday when they deliver the budget, but also there are some that require further analysis that will be delivered in budget number two this fall. So with constant negativity, you're single-handedly crushing business confidence and instilling fear in the people of the province. I know the Premier is going to find a way to blame us on this as well.

I ask the Premier anyway: Why not deliver a 12-month budget plan on Thursday? Why wait for budget number two in the fall and leave people with that instilled fear that they have throughout Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, first of all, I want to address the first part of his comments there. I was waiting for the question. As the group opposite sat on their hands when people of this province were demanding an inquiry into search and rescue services in Newfoundland and Labrador, what did this group do? They had the option to call that inquiry, I say, Mr. Speaker, and they denied it and they refused to do it.

Now, back to the question about the budget on Thursday; I'm very interested in knowing, and I'm pleased to hear that they are concerned and they are looking forward to Thursday. I'm also interested in why they are so interested in distancing themselves from the budget on Thursday of this week when they had a five-year plan that has failed.

We will improve the future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that will start on Thursday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: It will start with some of the tough decisions that we and the ministers have had to make as a result of the actions they did not take in the past. What they're trying to do is distance themselves from what they should be responsible for, and yes, we do blame you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: So yesterday the Premier said it was my first budget, now he's acknowledging it was a five-year plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: A plan that was only in effect for a few short months, and a plan in that few short months the bond rating agencies supported. In just the matter of a few short weeks after they took office the bond rating agencies reacted and showed the confidence that they don't have in the current government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I didn't intend to ask this question today but now that the Premier has raised it, he's raised the fact that they had promised an inquiry. As a matter of fact, they promised three inquiries.

Maybe the Premier can tell us: When are you going to start calling those inquiries you promised that were so urgently needed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, as we said about the inquiries, they will be done. This is a commitment that we stand by.

I am very interested to see how the Leader of the Opposition stands by his five-year plan. Is he still standing by doubling the debt of our province, doubling the borrowing commitments? He can't be serious when he's saying it was the bond agencies that stood by their five-year plan which would have led to record borrowing, record debt, record unemployment in our province. They did not plan. They poorly managed this province.

He must be joking when he's thinking that the bond rating agencies weren't looking seriously at their dismal plan. It was only because of the work of the Minister of Finance, who we see here today, that we were actually able to turn some of that around, and on Thursday, yes, it will be a difficult budget, Mr. Speaker, I say. It is not one that we're proud of, but what we inherited on November 30, I can tell you right now, it was not a five-year plan or a plan for the future of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy for the Members opposite to play the blame game. We expect them to do that and they're exactly living up to our expectations.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier and Members opposite are well aware, the people are

concerned about the cutting of programs and services. People are concerned about their own jobs, their own ability to earn a living for their families.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is becoming quite evident to the people of the province that the Liberals have quickly lost touch with their promises and they've got very little focus on the people. I can tell the Premier, it is no joke when we talk about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has said there could be cuts in this budget, and there are more cuts to follow in budget number two in the fall.

Now I know they're going to blame us. They're going to find a way to blame us, but I ask: Why are you making the public and the business community, the public servants live in fear and uncertainty for an extra six months? Why won't you be open and transparent with them when you deliver their budget on Thursday?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the Member opposite keeps talking about blaming them. It seems to me as if he's the one that raises it all the time, so he really must be ashamed of his own record, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to lay out the facts as we see them within our province. Some of the impacts, as we said, they will be difficult decisions that we've had to make, but they are the right and they are the necessary decisions that will have to be made to get our province back on track.

Unfortunately, that is not the due diligence that the Members opposite – that is not the track they had taken over the past number of years. But making the right decisions so that we can protect the future of our public sector employees, and we do value them, we are prepared to enter into a fair negotiating process, as we said from day one. That commitment is intact.

Making the decisions now that we've seen in budget – on Thursday's budget, most of the tough decisions that we were able to make will be included there. Some more will require further work. That is called due diligence. That is called working with evidence. That is called research so that we can, indeed, make the right decisions for our future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members opposite, and the Premier is quite aware, rise in the House every day and they always start – it must be a set pattern over there. They get up and blame the previous administration before they get on.

I remind them, they are the government, and yes, the people did elect them to govern and to lead. It's time for them to start doing that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Analysis paralysis processes are paralyzing our province, Mr. Speaker. It's time for members opposite to make decisions. Yes, the right decisions as well, but to get on with the work of the day.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that many temporary government employees have been extended to September 30. They've been advised they're extended to September 30, just days before budget number two is expected to be received and to be delivered by Members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I know again the Premier is going to blame us for this somehow, but will he provide an update, or will the minister provide

an update on how many employees in the public sector have been given notice that their jobs are safe only until September?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, it's been interesting to sit and hear the conversation here this afternoon about the budget. I find it quite enlightening to hear the Member opposite who brought in a budget that promised to save and implement actions to save \$75 million through an initiative, and never bothered to sign the actual action to do that until sometime in late August. They had no intention of taking action on the budget that they brought in last year.

To the Member's question, we made a decision that those valued employees that work in a temporary capacity inside this government would be provided some clarity and some ability to plan over the course of six months. We made the decision to extend those temporary positions through to the next six months so those individuals would have clarity, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Just to clarify from the minister, are you indicating that they've been extended until September and the intention then is to terminate their employment at that point in time? Or is it to renew or decisions will be made at that point in time?

The question was: Can you tell me how many have been given that notice until September?

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

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

The review of temporary employment occurs towards the end of each fiscal year, as the Members opposite are quite aware of. These actions are part of their regular process related to all temporary employment that discontinues on March 31.

Government, as I said in my prior answer, we made the decisions, including job-related decisions, as part of – we will make decisions as part of budget 2016. It was our intention to make sure that those individuals who had temporary positions as of March 31 were extended through six months so we could be open and transparent with those individuals.

We understand that people are worried and that people are concerned. Our commitment is to be as open and transparent when we have information that we can share, and that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question I was asking the minister was for the number. How many public servants were advised that they would be extended until September? Maybe at some point in time the minister might be able to provide that information to us.

Mr. Speaker, on December 22 the government announced immediate action to help address the fiscal situation. As part of that directive, departments and agencies and boards and commissions were directed to refrain from creating or requesting new permanent, temporary, casual or contractual positions.

I ask the minister: Can she provide an update on how many positions or new hires have taken place in government since you've taken office?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, we have been undertaking a Government Renewal Initiative, as the Members opposite and the public are aware. Part of that process is to take a look at the recommendations from various departments, agencies, boards and commissions that outline actions that we can take as part of our budget for

2016. The workforce planning part of those discussions is ongoing.

It is interesting that the Member opposite wants to ask questions about the workforce when they implemented a plan of attrition. And as we talk to officials inside government, many, many, many of the leaders inside government said that that plan did not actually provide the depth of detail on workforce planning that is required, and this something that we intend to close the gap on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the information is not being provided. I appreciate if the minister does not have it at her fingertips, but I'd ask her to make it available to us or table it here in the House. I've asked for numbers of public servants who been advised that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've asked, Mr. Speaker, for a list of those who – not a list, but a number of how many public servants have been advised that their contracts would expire in September. I've also asked now how many new hires. I ask the minister if she would try and get that information for us.

I'm sure that the minister must be aware that there have been a number of new hires in departments, including Health and Nalcor. We know there have been hires in the Department of Finance and OCIO as well.

In an environment where the Premier has stated every dollar counts, and I agree it does, and were layoffs are expected this week and also in budget number two number fall, I ask the minister to be forthright and to advise if you can

provide an update on those new positions, on the change in positions and hires and staff from the time you took office until today. How many people have been hired on a permanent or contractual or temporary basis?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have the Leader of the Opposition come meet with officials of the Human Resource Secretariat to have a deep discussion about the workforce realities that core government faces. If he wants to sit through presentations from all of the agencies, boards and commissions, like our Treasury Board ministers did, I welcome him to sit down and have those conversations in his responsibility as Leader of the Opposition.

Quite frankly, the Member opposite should have had the experience to understand the total number of people at any given time that are in temporary positions, permanent positions or in a state of new hires is influx.

If he could pinpoint the exact date and moment that he would like to have that information, I will certainly do my best to have officials provide that information because, obviously, he is unable to remember the complications of that last year when he was in the role of premier.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our administration made smart investments in areas like aquaculture, ocean technology, Arctic opportunities, venture capital, rural broadband and the list goes on. We made strategic investments to diversify the economy. The people of our province are looking to the Liberal government to live up to their many campaign promises and to deliver their economic plan, the diversification plan, the magical LEAP plan they promised.

I ask the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development: Where is the economic diversification plan you promised the people of this province back in the fall?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to answer the question.

I've been given a clear mandate by the Premier to look at the economic diversification. Being the lead department in Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, we have a number of initiatives we will undertake when it comes to agriculture and growing that sector, when it comes to manufacturing. I've been meeting with the stakeholders in the innovation sector.

There are a number of initiatives that are taking place and will continue to do so in the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. We have a delegation here from Nunavut. Right now, we are talking about the opportunities and the partnerships where we can recruit. We can share knowledge and expertise and create new business opportunities.

I just met with accelerators in Propel ICT before I came here. There are lots of opportunities to look at how we can advance our economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. I am very pleased to continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That was an eloquent explanation of the fact that the Liberal government has no plan to diversify the economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I thought they only met with federal Liberals, but I guess they have other meetings as well. Other than having meetings and carrying on with the previous government's initiatives, what specific new actions has the minister taken to diversify and grow the economy in the last five months? Other than having meetings, what have you actually taken action on or done specifically related to economic diversification?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My department has undertaken a number of initiatives where we have held meetings with stakeholders because it is important to consult. It is very important to have that dialogue. We've had meetings with the agricultural community as well as forestry roundtable where I met with close to 40 participants, where we talked about the challenges and opportunities that lie in the sector and how we can advance and move forward in Wooddale, in Central Newfoundland and Labrador. We're taking initiatives and steps as to how we can improve the forest sector.

I've met with the arts community. I've met with innovation. I've been throughout the province, actually, on the West Coast, in Central Newfoundland, in the CBN area. I'll continue to have that dialogue as we look at opportunities to move forward and make strategic investments so that we can grow the economy.

Our government has a clear vision, our Premier has a clear vision and our department has a lot of opportunities and knowledgeable staff that can actually help advance the business community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So lots of consultation, meetings and touring, but no decisions, no action, no taking a stand on anything and clearly no plan.

Mr. Speaker, the blame game ramped up yesterday and it was in high gear with the Premier's comments today. The go-to answer from the Liberals is: not our fault. They aren't saying or doing much else.

Well, the Liberals stated that they would unveil a major economic announcement that would create jobs and grow the economy, the Liberal Economic Action Plan.

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement: Because she was one of the people leading the LEAP tour last summer, can she provide the results of this plan and release the plan, because the Premier and the minister responsible seem to be unwilling?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much for the opportunity to address that question.

I was a very proud Member of the Liberal action team for the LEAP. We consulted with many, many people in this province. We developed a positive action plan that the current Premier has had and reviewed, and I'm sure this government is going to action, unlike the former government who didn't do very much in terms of diversification, certainly over the last dozen years when we look at some of the economic conditions that we have today.

Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly get to that. I have every utmost faith in my colleague the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. He is exceptionally talented in this area, and I know he's meeting with the people that we had lots of discussions on.

So it's a very robust plan. I know he's getting to it, and I know he'll be doing a good job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Minister of Finance recently instructed departments, boards, commissions and agencies to examine every single program through a so-called partnership test. Proponents of public-private partnerships use questionable calculations to inflate government procurement costs. The idea is to make P3s appear more cost efficient. Auditors General across this country continue to disagree with these calculations.

I ask the Premier: What calculation formula is his minister using in her attempt to make privatizing government services look cheaper than conventional government procurement costs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, any time you enter into a decision that affects the province and the investments that would have to be made – as an example, the long-term care plan that the previous administration had entered into, when we really got in and we reviewed that plan, it was too narrow in scope to make any final analysis on what truly would be the economic outcome or the service outcome to the people of the province. So as a result of that plan that the previous administration put in place was cancelled.

When you look at privatization or community partnerships, in some cases it's partnerships with associations. In some cases it could be partnerships with a community, as an example.

So, anytime you have an opportunity where you can advance the services for people of Newfoundland and Labrador and create partners – not just with business, but in many cases with our communities – that we can improve the outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, that's the discussion we're prepared to have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

They have started a process with their agencies, commissions and departments.

I want to know: Will the minister table any analysis used in determining the basis of comparison between proposed P3 and normal procurement cost, or else how can they make that determination?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, we will table any information we use in relation to any decisions we make on any possible changes in service delivery for the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, recent analysis shows that privatizing liquor stores in Alberta and BC resulted in higher prices and lower revenues to government. Saskatchewan government stands to lose \$3.5 to \$7.5 million in revenue annually by allowing only four new private liquor stores to open in that province.

I ask the Premier: Is government considering privatizing Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation stores?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, when we come into the House on Thursday of this week and present the budget, we'll be presenting a series of information about the actions that we're undertaking as part of budget '16, which contrary to the Official Leader of the Opposition's comments earlier, it is the budget

for the full year. We will be coming back in the fall with supplemental actions.

Those decisions that we would make will be revealed in those budgets. I certainly look forward to providing that information to the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did not hear no from the minister. Since privatization, Alberta has foregone nearly \$1.5 billion in revenue.

Is the Premier saying he is willing, at this time, to lose the revenue generated by publicly owned liquor stores?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member opposite that this government is going to do every single thing it can do to close the multi-billion dollar deficit that the former administration left and racked up for the people of the province. We will make sure that we find every penny to be able to invest in critical services for the people of the province.

We want to ensure and we must ensure that the services people of the province need are there when they need them. I can assure the Member opposite, that's the work we're undertaking as part of the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre for a quick question.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, is the Premier willing to lose over 500 full-time equivalent well-paying public sector jobs across the

province by privatizing the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor stores?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member opposite that there isn't one Member on this House of Assembly – and I would argue any Member in this hon. House – that takes pleasure in the realization that there has to be some form of action that corrects the fiscal situation we're in. It is not something that we take pleasure in. It is a very difficult situation. We will continue to make those decisions based on the right things for the people of the province.

Our focus is to make sure we do everything we can to have as many people working in this province because that's important for our economy, it's important for people and their families and it's an important priority for this government, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period had expired.

Before we continue with the Order Paper, I've shown a great deal of leniency with the timing of questions and answers. Today has gotten a little out of hand. We've had both questions and answers from both sides that have exceeded 60 seconds. I ask Members to try to contain your questions to somewhere between 45 and 50 seconds and the answers to 45 to 50 seconds.

The other thing that I've noticed today is today is the first Question Period that has gotten boisterous. I promised order and decorum. I intend to keep that promise for the people of the province. I showed some leniency today because it is the first day that it's gotten as boisterous as it has, but we will be containing the level of heckling especially during Question Period in the future.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the *Public Tender Act* I hereby table reports of the *Public Tender Act Exceptions* for September, October, November and December of 2015, and January and February of 2016, as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given – I'm sorry, Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, Bill 12.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District trustees propose to close Whitbourne Elementary effective June 2016 and bus them to a distant school; and

WHEREAS Whitbourne Elementary is an important accessible and inclusive neighbourhood school with programs, community partnerships and extracurricular activities designed to meet the particular needs of the children who attend it;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that Whitbourne Elementary school remains open.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I'm very pleased, once again, Mr. Speaker, to stand on behalf of the residents of Whitbourne and area, the parents of the children who go to school there and the community leaders, in presenting this petition. Once again today hundreds upon hundreds of signatures adding up over the past two days to almost 2,000 signatures from people in the Trinity Bay South area, the whole Whitbourne area, the Placentia – St. Mary's area; signatures from Conception Bay South, Conception Bay North all the way to St. John's.

Almost 2,000 signatures now I've presented here in this House, of people who recognize the responsibility of this government and the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for making sure the district school board of trustees do what they are mandated to do. They have a responsibility for making sure that any changes, any closures of schools that are happening are being done for the good of the children and of the parents and guardians of those children. That is the minister's responsibility. That is the government's responsibility.

They have to answer to the parents who stood on April 2 in Whitbourne and poured their guts out, Mr. Speaker, and apologized for having to do it. Apologized for having to stand up and talk about the needs of their children who have special needs that are taken care of in the Whitbourne Elementary school. They apologized for talking about these personal, intimate details. They had to, because the children in a fully accessible school with a community that supports that accessibility are now going to be – if this school

board makes the decision that is on the table, if they make that decision, these children's needs are not going to be met.

The school they're going to is not even accessible, and that is a fact. It will not be able to meet the needs of these children. Their parents are so concerned that their education is going to be disturbed. They are not going to have their needs met. They are going to miss school. There are times they will not be able to go to school. Mr. Speaker, I humbly present this petition on their behalf.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of residents in the Mount Pearl area. To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS an extension is urgently needed at St. Peter's Primary school in Mount Pearl in order to accommodate full-day kindergarten and the growing school population;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to clarify its position and plan so that St. Peter's Primary and other schools in Newfoundland and Labrador can properly accommodate students when full-day kindergarten commences in September 2016.

And is in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to this issue in the past in this session of the House of Assembly. I've also had an opportunity to correspond with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and I thank him for the response.

There is some more particular information that is needed by parents from the school board to

address some specific concerns that still have not been addressed. Overcrowding is the fundamental issue at St. Peter's Primary. It's not about staffing. There are great staff and a very engaged school council. It's not about ratios. The issue is that there isn't sufficient physical space for the programs that are proposed for September 2016.

The fact that government and the school board have delayed the planned extension that was budgeted for, it now won't be ready until at least 2018. That means that we have a bad situation for at least two school years. This is an extension that should be fast-tracked.

There is inadequate space for the play-based learning model and teen teaching for full-day kindergarten. Soon there will be no outside play space due to modular classrooms and the eventual construction. The parking issues are atrocious and will only get worse. Students will be eating lunch at their desks for the next two years. We're concerned about what supervision will be in place over the lunch period for kindergarten classes, particularly the ones with over 27 students in them and there will be at least three of those.

Rezoning the school two years ago was an unfortunate decision that I spoke against at the time. The move to K to 3 has made this situation worse. We need the extension. We need accommodation for outside play space. The parking issues need to be addressed. Some of the supervision issues that are being raised need to be addressed as well.

This is fundamentally about overcrowding. There is more that can be done, and I hope that the school board will take the necessary action.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the English school board trustees propose to close down Holy Cross Junior High school and send students to a distant school; and

WHEREAS the school board has arbitrarily and without consultation reduced the Holy Cross Junior High catchment area and students will have to be bused to a far more distant school; and

WHEREAS Holy Cross is an important neighbourhood school with programs, community partnerships and extracurricular activities designed to meet the particular needs of the inner-city students who attend it; and

WHEREAS the English school board trustees are an appointed body and no longer accountable to the people who elected them;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that Holy Cross Junior High school remains open and to immediately arrange for a democratically elected English school board.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy once again to stand in this House to speak on behalf of the parents and guardians and the children of Holy Cross Junior High, and the children of St. John's Centre who would hopefully be attending Holy Cross Junior High.

I was astounded yesterday in the House to hear the Minister of Education say this is not within his responsibility. That the responsibility rests solely with the school board. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out again, as I have before, some of the quotes by the Minister of Education while he was in Opposition. He was speaking specifically about the English school district and also specifically about the current board of trustees because, as we know, there has not been a school board election since the year 2009.

That is scandalous, Mr. Speaker, because we know – all of us in this House know how important it is to have duly elected, accountable trustees on our school board. That's the very foundation of our school board so that, in fact,

the school board is at arm's-length from government, but it is government who makes sure that happens.

I say, in fact, it is the responsibility of the Minister of Education to ensure that the very foundation, the very integrity of our school board system, with duly elected school board trustees, is in fact carried out. I'd say, Mr. Speaker, in fact that he is abdicating his responsibility. It is truly his responsibility to do that. Otherwise, what do we have? We have complete anarchy because we do not have a duly elected school board.

I'd say every Member in this House of Assembly, particularly those Members who have children in schools –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time for speaking is expired.

MS. ROGERS: – know exactly how important that is.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise again today to present the petition I presented – this is probably the third time now. As I said, I will continue to present it.

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

WHEREAS policing is vital to the protection and service of our province's communities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to increase the presence of law enforcement in the Conception Bay South area.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, those petitions, I have a stack of them. Actually, they were delivered to me right throughout the community. I said it yesterday and I'll say it again today that it stretches from the MHA for Harbour Main right from Seal Cove right down to my colleague for Topsail – Paradise District, right at the beginning of Paradise. The entire district is calling on an increased police presence. As I said yesterday, I made a commitment I would advocate for the residents, and I'm continuing to do that.

Like you say, it's fine to have a police vehicle – if you live 30 minutes outside of Fort Townshend, you need a dedicated office that people can see, locate it. There has to be something manned. It's fundamentally flawed in my mind when you've got a town the size of CBS that is arguably the largest municipality in the province outside the City of St. John's, and we've got three cars that sometimes they're called away and you've got one vehicle on – we only had two up until about two weeks ago.

We don't have anywhere to go, there is no office space, and there is no recognition the police force exists. There was a building there at one time with a satellite office. That's no longer there. I've spoken to the town that, I think, would be willing to have conversations with the RNC to provide some sort of office space. It's an issue within the municipality, it's an issue I discussed with our town council, and it's an issue I continue to speak on. I have a lot more petitions to present, Mr. Speaker. It's something I'm passionate about. Like I said yesterday, I got the message loud and clear from the constituents, and I guess my role in the House of Assembly is to stand and speak on their behalf, which is exactly what I'm doing.

So I once again call upon the government to give some consideration to having a dedicated office with dedicated officers for the Town of CBS. Protection is everything. As we know, armed robberies are happening on a daily basis, and they are happening in CBC probably on a percentage-wise more than anywhere else. Crime, accidents – we have a lot of drugs. It's a lot of things happening in our society and people don't feel safe.

If you don't feel safe, Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty sad statement. I think increased police

presence will give an increased sense of security, and no doubt increasing police presence will give people more sense of security.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour and a privilege for me to stand in the House and present this petition today. To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS our province's seniors deserve quality care and assistance when residing in long-term care facilities; and

WHEREAS our province is currently experiencing an escalating shortage of long-term care beds;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to explore all options, including partnerships to create new long-term care beds in this province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we have an aging population in this province. I'm sure all Members of this of this hon. House place great value on our seniors. Our seniors are certainly the reason for being for all of us. They deserve the best of care in their golden years. As a government, we have a responsibility to ensure that we do what we can to ensure these years are as enjoyable as they possibly can be. The government of the day certainly has a responsibility to address this major issue.

I was absolutely shocked, I have to say – I'm digressing a little bit from what I had intended to talk about – when I heard today in the House no denial for the privatization of Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, but no support

whatsoever by government opposite for looking at public-private partnership for seniors' home care. I find that very disturbing, Mr. Speaker. It makes you wonder where the priorities are and where the people versus profits really fit in the minds of the Members opposite.

Long wait times for long-term care and acute care services remain in our health sector today, and left unchecked these wait times are going to continue to grow, Mr. Speaker. Aggressive action needs to be taken and it needs to be taken now. Our seniors deserve better, far better than what they are receiving from the government of the day.

Newfoundland and Labrador is facing an increase in demand for long-term care and community support services. With the population aging and prevalence of chronic disease and disability increasing, the government must find a way to meet the needs of seniors and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I am at a loss to understand why the government will not consider public-private partnerships because it is in other jurisdictions a very successful model that works without cost to the government. I would venture to say it would save government much more than what it will supposedly make by privatization of many of our services in this province, such as the Liquor Corporation and God knows what else we're going to hear about on Thursday.

One thing I do like is the commitment to provide a cost-benefit analysis on all of that and we'll certainly be posing the question for the people of the province –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – what's in the best interest: partnerships for the people.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, third reading of Bill 4.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act, be read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 4 be now read a third time.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act. (Bill 4)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act, has now been read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill be read the third time?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 4)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, third reading of Bill 5.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that Bill 5, An Act To Amend The Interprovincial Subpoena Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 5 be now read a third time.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Interprovincial Subpoena Act. (Bill 5)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 5, An Act To Amend The Interprovincial Subpoena Act, has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Interprovincial Subpoena Act,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 5)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 7, second reading of Bill 7.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the minister responsible for Vital Statistics.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that I now read Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, and be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009.” (Bill 7)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to open debate on an amendment to the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*, and making a consequential amendment to the *Change of Name Act, 2009*.

The *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*, governs the registration of births, marriages, deaths and other vital events or information, including gender designation. Under the current legislation, individuals who wish to change their gender designation on their birth registration or marriage registration must first undergo sex reassignment surgery.

The proposed amendments being presented here today will enable a person to change the gender designation on a birth registration or marriage registration without having to undergo surgery.

These amendments to the act respond to the changes that have been requested by the LGBT community advocates, as well as a recent human rights ruling. For advocates, this issue speaks to a person’s right to self-expression, safety and privacy.

Other jurisdictions have recognized similar concerns with the legislation, and the amendments we are making today reflect changes that have already been made in some other provinces. With the passing of this amendment, Newfoundland and Labrador will join Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia in allowing a change of gender designation on both birth registrations and marriage registrations without the need for surgery.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to provide the hon. House with more detail on the amendments we are seeking. Under the proposed amendments, individuals age 16 and older will be able to apply to change their gender marker on birth and marriage registrations without the need to undergo surgery. Those under the age of 16 will require a parent or guardian to make an application on their behalf.

These age limits are consistent with other provincial legislation that allows individuals 16 and older to make significant decisions on their own. For instance, a 16-year-old man can make an advance health care directive under the *Advance Health Care Directives Act*. In addition, they are no longer considered a child under the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*, and may make certain decisions about their own well-being independently. Allowing individuals 16 and older to apply on their own behalf is consistent with some of the other jurisdictions which have removed the requirement of surgery.

As part of the application process, a person requesting a change in gender marker will have to provide a declaration stating they identify with and intend to maintain his or her chosen gender identity. Applicants must also provide a supporting statement from a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, or a social worker that confirms the gender designation being applied for is consistent with the gender the individual identifies as.

Whether an individual lives in an urban or rural community, they should be able to access at least one of these types of professionals to assist with their application. In the case of an application for a child under the age of 12, two supporting statements from separate professionals will be required in order to ensure protection of the child's rights.

The proposed approach is in keeping with the professional collaboration already required for both registrations in general and designated to maintain the integrity of the registries. Requiring professional confirmation is also consistent with what has been done in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure consistency with other legislation, we are also proposing an amendment to the *Change of Name Act, 2009* with respect to age requirements.

Currently, a person must be 19 years or older in order to independently apply for a change of name. To be consistent with the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* we need now to amend the other legislations to allow someone who is 16 or older to change their name, in addition to

changing gender. This is done simply by changing the definition of a child under the *Change of Name Act* to a person under the age of 16 years and by allowing a person 16 or older to make an application to change their name.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been able to apply for a change of gender designation on their birth or marriage registration since December 2015. To date, more than 20 people have availed of this opportunity since it became available in December.

Government policies were changed at that time in response to an order issued by the board of inquiry that was established by the provincial Human Rights Commission to address this issue. The order required that transgender individuals would no longer have to undergo reassignment surgery in order to have their gender marker changed on their birth certificate or marriage registration. This effectively made the requirement to have the existing *Vital Statistics Act* null and void.

Service NL responded to the order in a matter of days to accommodate those who wanted to make changes to the gender marker on their birth or marriage registrations. While the order from the Human Rights Commission was effective in allowing the department to change its processes, it did not, in and of itself, actually change the legislation. As such, amendments to the legislation are necessary to reconcile the gap between our practices and the legislative provisions.

Mr. Speaker, we believe the proposed amendment will support inclusion in our society and address some of the barriers that transgender people experience in our society. This amendment is about ensuring the safety and the dignity of transgender individuals, and as I have noted previously, this is something that has been advocated by the LGBT community for some time.

Mr. Speaker, as this amendment respects and protects the dignity of transgender individuals, we hope to have the co-operation of the hon. Members in passing it. When an individual identity and gender expression do not match their identification documents, they can

experience anxiety, an invasion of their privacy and sense of security. These amendments will help transgender people not to have to explain themselves to strangers. This may also help to avoid possible discriminations or violence against trans individuals.

I'll conclude now by expressing appreciation for the efforts of the advocates who have expressed their point of view on this matter, including my hon. colleagues opposite. I thank them for their courage and commitment to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, advancing the rights of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is a top priority of our government. By amending the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* and the *Change of Name Act, 2009* to support inclusion and protect the human rights of transgender individuals, we will do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to thank all Members on both sides of the House. I'm sure we're going to get unanimous consent and support on this. I just want to thank the Official Opposition and the Member for St. John's Centre also for their support on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, this will ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, transgender people are treated with dignity and respect. Hopefully, now they will feel that this government is listening to their concerns and needs, and that we treat everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador in one way, that is with respect and dignity. This bill, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, will prove that.

I thank the government before for having the bill ready, Mr. Speaker, and the Third Party also for their support in the last month or so on this. This is a government effort, I know, Mr. Speaker, but this is with the support of all people in the House of Assembly because I know all people in the House of Assembly are looking forward to this and support this 100 per cent for the transgender community. I thank everybody for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I got to say, this is a great bill today. I want to thank the minister and the department for giving us a great briefing on this particular bill.

It's a sign of the times. It's somewhere we should be. This bill is important to a big part of our community out there. We have to make sure that people are treated fairly and with the respect they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give you a little overview. I know the minister just went through a whole lot of it that time but I will just give you a brief overview on the bill itself, where it came from and how we're here today. He said his government. I'm sure the whole House will be supporting this bill because it is the right thing to do. We need to do the right thing for this community.

In November 2015 the Human Rights Board of Inquiry heard a case of individuals noted. Under regulation, proof of transsexual surgery was needed to be able to do a change of name. That was done – the Human Rights heard this, like I said, in November 2015. Immediately on their decision, the provincial government stated its intent in July that the legislation, this amendment under the *Vital Statistics Act*, during the next sitting of the House of Assembly – where we are today – this would be addressed.

The Human Rights Commission found that the current legislation and this requirement did discriminate on the basis of gender identification, and thus ordered to make a requirement to remove it. That's what we're basically doing here today, Mr. Speaker. The changes on this legislation will give persons who identify themselves as another gender, but not who undergo surgery, the ability to have their gender marker changed on their birth certificate. Once they change it on the birth certificate that opens it up to be able to change it on different certificates through government, through the Department of Service NL.

Prior to these amendments, individuals who wished to have their birth certificates changed, they had to show documentation that they underwent sexual reassignment surgery. Mr. Speaker, there are many groups that have advocated on this. I have to applaud one of the Members here in the House of Assembly, the Member from the Third Party and my colleague for St. John's Centre. She was a great advocate for this. I applaud her today because it's a great thing here. I want to recognize that she did advocate a lot on this particular bill. Without doing this bill we expose transgender people to the potential of violence and discrimination, and the limited services that they can provide in government.

Mr. Speaker, the outcome of these amendments will be seen as positive step for our province. Initial processing for both these amendments was by our government. I'm not just taking credit for it because I'm sure all parties in this House would have, but we brought this forward. As soon as the Human Rights Board met we said this is the right thing to do. That's why we're here today in the first sitting of the House to make sure that this is done properly.

This legislation is in line with other jurisdictions and is seen as human rights – the LGBT community are applauding and all advocates are applauding that we're doing this here today. These amendments change the age through which a person may apply for gender marker change without the consent of a parent. That's bringing it into line with everything else; 16-year-old is where most legislation is to, not 19. Previously it was 19 years of age, but this legislation brings it to 16 years of age.

Where children are less than 16 years of age and wish to have their gender marker changed, this legislation lays out a process to do so. The process is in line with that for an adult, but requires the consent of parents and two statements from two individual professionals. These amendments are in line with other jurisdictions and in line with the ages used in family court and other regulatory institutions in our province.

The legislation illustrates the entirety of this House's commitment to ensuring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have access

to citizenship documents that are accurately reflected on their personal information. It is important to note that the process allows a birth certificate to be changed but once that's changed, other documents can also be changed.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important part of this bill. These changes are handled by Service NL with the most confidentiality as possible. They are handled directly by the Registrar and the Deputy Registrar. They are not handled by front-line workers. This is to ensure the safety and protection and the privacy of those people applying. Changes on this will only take one to two weeks once the application is filed to the province.

Our society has progressed and so does our province need to. Laws that we govern need to change. The hope is that these amendments will bring us closer to having a more equal and just society.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the minister speak and, again, I reiterate what he just said. This is a great bill here today, great amendments that are made. It is something that is long overdue. Any time that we can make our society better and safer and more inclusive for everybody, it's a great thing to do. So we will be supporting this bill 100 per cent.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in this hon. House today to continue debate on the proposed amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*. This needs to be changed for fairness and equality. I'm also pleased to see that the Members across from all three parties are going to be unanimous on this issue.

As my hon. colleague, the Minister of Service NL, mentioned in his opening comments, the type of changes we are pursuing today have been in place in a number of other jurisdictions across Canada. To fully understand the significance of the proposed amendments, not only here in Newfoundland and Labrador but

throughout our country, I believe it is worthwhile to discuss the national developments over the last few years. Doing so informs the debate and creates a greater appreciation of how these amendments being discussed today will bring our province in line with the country or where the country is going with respect to this issue.

Currently, section 26 of the province's *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*, outlines the requirement for an application to change a person's designation of gender on their birth or marriage registration. It is in this section of the act that currently requires applicants to have sex reassignment surgery prior to making the application.

Madam Speaker – Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure which one is in the Chair yet. Madam Speaker, this requirement was consistent with requirements from all other jurisdictions across Canada at the time the act came into force in 2009. However, since that time, a number of jurisdictions have re-examined the requirements for sex reassignment surgery in light of human rights complaints and challenges under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To date, British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta and Nova Scotia have already amended the legislation to allow a person to change their sex designation on their birth registration without having sex reassignment surgery. British Columbia, Alberta and Nova Scotia amendments are in full force. Some of Manitoba's amendments are in force, while others have not yet been proclaimed to date. Ontario is proposing changes to its legislation to remove the requirement for sex reassignment surgery. These changes are expected to be introduced soon.

In response to a court order, Ontario has already implemented a new process for changing the gender designation on birth certificates without sex reassignment surgery. As for other provinces, we are aware that Quebec and New Brunswick are in the review process. For every province addressing the issue, the overarching policy objective is the same, to remove the requirement for sex reassignment surgery; however, there are differences in the approach used to achieve this objective. I want to take a moment to elaborate on our proposed approach.

In places like British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Ontario, applicants are required to have a statement of confirmation from either a psychologist or a doctor in support of their application. As part of the amendments we are proposing, applicants will have the freedom to seek a statement of support from a much broader group of professionals including a physician, psychologist, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, social worker.

By broadening the type of professionals who can provide supporting documentation, we have made it easier for individuals located anywhere in our province to seek out a professional they trust, which is very, very important when completing their application for gender marker change.

We felt it was very appropriate to expand the range of professionals beyond the medical field to include social workers. Social workers have a unique experience and perspective with respect to helping individuals enhance their personal well-being.

Requiring individuals to provide supporting documentation is consistent with practices in other jurisdictions across our country. Such measures ensure the integrity of vital statistic registries and information.

Madam Speaker, Service NL put the new process in place last December to facilitate the changes to gender markers on birth registrations and marriage registrations. This was done in response to an order by the Board of Inquiry established by the province's Human Rights Commission.

Given that approximately 30 people have already availed of this opportunity to apply for a change in their gender marker on their birth and/or marriage registration, we have a good indication that our new process is accessible to those who want to take advantage of it.

Our process evolved from significant research and review. This included a cross-jurisdictional scan and consultation with officials from other provinces to understand how the issues have evolved elsewhere and how they responded in changing their legislation and practices. In my

opinion, looking at the best practices anywhere is always a key to success.

Collaboration also took place across departments to develop a full appreciation of the legal, social, policy and personal health implications associated with any legislative amendments.

We listened to the feedback from the Human Rights Commission and advocates who spoke on behalf of transgendered individuals. We acted quickly with the Human Rights Commission to provide an opportunity to assist individuals in the interim while waiting for legislative amendments to be presented in this very House.

Today, we stand in this hon. House with an amendment that is tremendously important to the transgendered individuals and the LGBTQ-plus community throughout our province. Passing this amendment will complement other efforts to promote greater inclusion in our society.

For example, as noted in the Speech from the Throne, our government will develop guidelines supporting equality and inclusion of all students including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and gender non-conforming students. This will complement the training provided to the district staff and the implementation of teacher training across the province for the purpose of building awareness for the LGBTQ inclusive practices.

Madam Speaker, our efforts in this regard are in keeping with the government's commitment to support a safe and sustainable community. We put the well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians above all else. The amendment we are debating today in this hon. House will have a positive impact on the transgendered individuals who are waiting for this to become law.

I encourage Members opposite to stand with us – and I'm sure they will – and bring their wait to an end so that Newfoundland and Labrador can join many other provinces across Canada in taking the action to address this issue and ensure we protect the rights of everyone in society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to rise and speak briefly to Bill 7 today. This is an important piece of legislation. It's one that we were certainly committed to. I'm pleased to see the government is following through and taking action and getting this unfinished piece of business taken care of.

I'm only going to comment for a minute or so, Madam Speaker. I think Members who have spoken so far have done a good job outlining the issues that are addressed through this bill and why it's necessary and why it's important.

First and foremost, I simply want to say what we're talking about is a safety issue. Trans people can find themselves in difficult situations abroad, for instance, if their appearance doesn't match their identity on a government issued identification card. So there is a legitimate, practical safety concern and reality that needs to be addressed here. That can leave trans people more vulnerable to harassment and abuse. It forces them to be out as trans in what could be very unsafe situations. Trans people deserve to feel comfortable in themselves and in their communities and live a normal life without fear of being treated inappropriately.

Some people can't have sex reassignment surgery due to medical reasons, and it is important to acknowledge that as well. Wait lists for these surgeries are between two to five years. People have to leave the province for these surgeries which means taking leave from work as well. That could result in loss of income, depending on the type of job they have.

This type of legislation is progressive. It is nothing new. It has happened in other provinces. It's the right thing to do and I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 7 today.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Madam Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to continue debate on proposed amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*.

My hon. colleague, the Minister of Service NL, has already spoken to the specific details of the proposed amendment. Another hon. colleague spoke to some of the history of the issue and developments in other jurisdictions over time. This was done to help paint a picture of how change of gender designation on vital statistics documents is being handled elsewhere and how that compares to our proposed approach.

At this time, I would like to speak about how today's proposed amendment is in keeping with our government's five-point plan and provides a great opportunity for collaboration among all hon. Members.

Madam Speaker, supporting safe and sustainable communities is one of the five points of our government's approach to building a stronger tomorrow. When we discuss this amendment in this hon. House we are discussing a human rights issue. We are discussing an individual's right to self-expression and the right to feel safe.

Up to this point, transgender people have been required to undertake an expensive, irreversible and hard to access surgery in order to get documentation that reflects the gender identity they identify with. This has created situations where transgender people have had to make a difficult decision whenever they had to present identification. Many have been in a position where they had to decide if they were willing to reveal themselves as being transgender and have a discussion in public about why their gender marker may not match their presentation. Sometimes they do not even have a choice. It is a situation that has caused people stress and has caused many to fear for their personal safety.

At a time when we are focused on promoting healthy and safe communities, this cannot continue. Concerns about this issue have been raised by representatives from the province's Human Rights Commission and by advocates for the province's LGBTQ community.

As outlined previously, governments in British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario, Nova

Scotia, Quebec and New Brunswick also see this as an important priority and are at varying stages of addressing the issue with changes. Four of those jurisdictions, British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta and Nova Scotia have already amended their legislation to allow a person to change their gender designation on their birth registration without having sex reassignment surgery. This gave us a blueprint to work with in terms of developing our approach.

Having consulted best practice, the provincial government proceeded to speak with health and social work professionals to gain their expertise. Then, based on all this information, a number of departments helped develop our government's approach as outlined by the Minister of Service NL. As a result, we are now ready to proceed with an important and comprehensive amendment. As noted previously, our approach will also require a change to the *Change of Name Act, 2009*.

Currently, a person must be 19 years or older in order to independently apply for a change of name. To maintain consistency across provincial legislation, we will need to amend the *Change of Name Act, 2009* to allow someone who is 16 or older to change their name, in addition to changing their gender marker. This is done simply by changing the definition of child under the *Change of Name Act* to a person under the age of 16 years, and by allowing a person 16 or older to make an application to change of name.

I truly hope we have the support of all hon. Members in advancing all necessary amendments to address this serious issue.

To reiterate, Mr. Speaker, we have an important issue for members of the LGBTQ community. We have received feedback, expertise and calls to action from advocates and representatives of the provincial Human Rights Commission. We have information from other jurisdictions. We have the analysis of officials in multiple provincial government departments, and now hon. Members have our first opportunity with this spring sitting of the House of Assembly to take action to protect the rights and well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Our government pledged we would collaborate with other parties on a variety of issues, and I

believe this is one where we can agree we have a well-researched approach, and the time to move forward is at hand. I urge all my colleagues in this hon. House to vote in favour of the amendments we have processed and enshrine into legislation a solution to an issue that has negatively impacted transgender people throughout Canada.

Our proposed amendments protect people's dignity, privacy, safety and ability to freely and fully express themselves. I believe our proposed amendments could serve as a valuable guide for other jurisdictions that may follow us in pursuing changes to policies and procedures that have had negative impacts on members of the LGBTQ community.

Let us now join together to show people in the community, people working for human rights and interested parties in other jurisdictions in Canada and throughout the world, that the Members of this hon. House are able to work together to bring forward legislation that promotes a stronger, safer and more inclusive society. Let us show the Human Rights Commission, the advocates and the LGBTQ community that their faith in us is well placed. Let us vote in favour of this proposed amendment and permanently enshrine in legislation a change that will bring a world of positive change for transgender individuals.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today I am very, very proud to stand in this House and to be able to speak to Bill 7. This has been a long time coming. Although the bill was only just recently introduced to our House and although I have been speaking about this issue perhaps only in the last year and a half in this House, the amount of work that has gone on to get us to this stage has been monumental.

Before going any further, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all those who have gone

before us who have worked so hard to get us to this motion. How many trans folks and their allies, human rights activists, LGBTQ activists have worked sometimes with the potential of their own personal danger – their work has been brilliant. It has been persistent. It has been courageous, hard work and it's been done by those directly affected and our allies as well. So today I would like to dedicate this session of the House of Assembly to those people who have worked so hard to get us to this point.

Madam Speaker, only in the year 2012 I raised a question of the last minister of the Justice with the previous administration about changing our *Human Rights Act* to include gender identity and gender expression. He said we couldn't do it; it was too complicated. Here we are, only a few years later, and that legislation has been amended.

I would like to take a great sense of pride in having a hand in getting that legislation changed because I was able to bring people from the trans community to meet with the minister of Justice, to meet with officials in the Justice Department, to talk about why it was so important to change our *Human Rights Act* to include gender identity and gender expression.

Once we get beyond stereotypes, once we get beyond ignorance, once we get beyond discrimination, once we stop and we listen to each other with the real intention of hearing, we get it, because we are an evolving society. We know that hate, discrimination and misunderstanding that it brings none of us any further. We know that we can get beyond that.

That is what's happening in our legislation now. We know that as we evolve as a society, how important it is for our legislation, for our laws, for our policies to keep up with our greater understanding, with our intolerance for intolerance, with our intolerance for hatred. That is what we're looking at here today.

I am proud of the activists who have gone before us. I am proud of the work that we have done in this House around the issue of gender identity and gender expression. We did it – we did it!

Although in this House it was stated only a few years ago that it was too complicated, but once

we start listening to one another, once we start exploring, we know that nothing is too complicated and that we have the ability to evolve. We have the ability to do the right thing, and that is what we are doing here today.

I'd also like to thank and give a big shout out to Kyra Rees, a trans woman who so bravely and courageously went to the Human Rights Commission looking for the right to change her gender markers on her birth certificate without having to first undergo sex reassignment surgery. It didn't pass with the Human Rights Commission. So then there was a court case and she was represented by Kyle Rees, a young, independent private lawyer, who did the work pro bono on behalf of Kyra Rees.

I'd like to thank them for their groundbreaking work. I'd like to thank them for their dedication, for their passion and their compassion. I'd like to thank all trans people who have pushed us, who have pulled us, who have educated us, who have spent time with us, who never gave up, to bring us to this point.

I'd like to thank the staff of Vital Statistics for their very thorough briefing. They did a lot of work on this legislation. I would like to thank the minister of Vital Statistics, of Service NL. I'd like to thank him for his persistence on this issue as well. Without all that work together, we would not get to this point today.

I would also like to thank the front-line workers at the department of Vital Statistics. I can remember years ago when the legislation was changed to allow same-sex marriage in Newfoundland and Labrador. I was the first lesbian, the first member of the LGBTQ community, to be appointed as a marriage commissioner. So I had to deal with the front-line workers there and they were fantastic. They actually celebrated once the law was changed to allow same-sex marriage.

We can all remember the years of opposition to that movement. Yet, it hasn't affected anybody else's marriage. The world has not fallen apart. As a matter of fact, we can all feel better because we know that this is about rights, it's about fairness, it's about justice and it's about dignity.

I would like to thank the front-line workers at Vital Statistics who have dealt with the new legislation in such a dignified and respectful manner to anyone who comes to them seeking marriage licences. Their work has been exemplary. As a marriage commissioner, I've had that same respect and dignity afforded to me. It's just a win-win situation.

I would like to thank the members of the Human Rights Commission and also the chair of the Human Rights Commission, Remzi Cej, for the great work that they have done being very proactive. Our Human Rights Commission, its role is not to be just reactive, but it's to be proactive as well. With the small budget they have, with the small number of staff they have and the huge job before them, they have done an incredible job.

Rights are not given, they are hard won. We know that, so we need to respect this process. Oftentimes as legislators, we are pulled kicking and screaming into evolving our laws, our policies and our regulations to meet where activists take us because they are teaching us to be tolerant, to have less tolerance for hatred and discrimination, and our laws have to reflect that and our policies must reflect that.

So why is this particular bill important? Because all it is, is a little "m" or a little "f" on your birth certificate. Why does this matter? It matters a lot for reasons of dignity, for reasons of fairness and justice, but also for personal safety.

The birth certificate is a foundational document, and it's from the birth certificate where every other document a person receives is based. If I'm looking for a passport, my passport will reflect what my birth certificate says. If I'm looking for a driver's licence, my driver's licence will reflect my gender as identified on my birth certificate. So it's important to be able to have all these documents aligned. But why is that important?

Imagine you are a 19-year-old transgendered woman. You pass as a woman, you appear as a woman, you live your life as a woman. You go to a bar and you are asked for your ID and your ID says that you are a man, yet you are very clearly presenting as a woman. Imagine how difficult that must be. Imagine.

Imagine if you are travelling to other countries and you are presenting as a woman, yet your passport says you are a man. In some countries, your very life could be in danger. That's why this is important. Aside from what appears to be the less urgent incidents of constantly coming out, it's also in these very, very important and sometimes dangerous incidents in people's lives. That's why this is so important. It doesn't diminish anything for anyone. It's the right thing to do.

Now, there were some issues I raised in the briefing with the staff from Service NL about some of the concerns that were raised by other activists. They were very, very good. We had a wonderful discussion and we talked about some issues about how they will be addressed, because once we start looking at issues of changing gender markers there's a domino effect on how it will affect ways that we register people, ways that we document people in our services.

So the current act that we have now doesn't allow flexibility in terms of changing the sex designation on the birth registration. Some people refer to that as the gender markers, whether you're marked as male or female. This legislation, in fact, will allow people to change their gender markers without having sexual reassignment surgery. A lot of people will not have sexual reassignment surgery. Some people may only have certain sexual reassignment surgery and not complete. Again, this protects all trans people.

Some of the issues that people were concerned about were my birth certificate, who will have access to my original birth certificate? Because what will happen is that the original birth certificate will stay as it is, the gender marker will be crossed out, and over that line the new gender will be added. So what does that mean? Who has access to that original birth certificate? We were assured that only the registrar and the deputy registrar have access to that original birth certificate and it's the birth mother who has access to that original birth certificate. So no one can go in and check to see whether or not your gender marker has been changed.

The other concern was: Do the police have access to it? Well, the police can only have

access to that original birth certificate if they apply to the Registrar General and then the Registrar General will get a legal opinion as to whether or not it's justified to allow the police to see that original birth certificate.

My concern as well was what will happen, for instance, if a child whose parent has changed their gender marker, what will happen if you cannot change a child's birth certificate – you cannot change the gender marker of a parent on a child's birth certificate. So my concern was what would happen if Susie was in grade one, she had a birth certificate and it said that her mother's name was Martha, but in fact her mother had changed, was transgender and was now a man, how difficult that would be for Susie.

Well, what we're assured is that, in fact, only the long-form birth certificate is accessible, the original birth certificate is accessible to the birth mother. In fact what happens in schools is that short-form birth certificates are given. It doesn't list the gender of the parents; it only lists the name and the gender of the person whose birth certificate it is. So there have been a number of issues that we discussed to make sure that there are protections in the rollout effects and the domino effects of any gender marker changes.

We will run into some particular difficulties. It's not entirely failsafe, but I believe that the good folks at the Department of Service NL have done their best and have used the most modern approach presently in the country of Canada to address this bill.

They have looked at other jurisdictions, in particular Alberta, BC, Manitoba and Ontario. Also, our legislation now is closest to the legislation in Nova Scotia. They've also expanded who can testify, who can assure that the person who says that they are transgender, in fact, are transgender. They have included beyond what other provinces have identified. They have also included nurses and social workers. So we feel pretty assured that people will be able to find somebody who can vouch for them so that they may be able to change their gender markers.

Madam Speaker, I am happy that we have gotten to this point. I believe that the legislative

changes are thorough. I believe that they are well planned out. I believe that for the most part the transgendered community and transgendered activists and LGBTQ activists will be happy with this change.

I do want to raise that we have not finished. The whole issue of health services for trans people in Newfoundland and Labrador is woefully inadequate. That's another issue that we are going to have to look at. It's another issue that demands our attention. It also is an issue of basic human rights and rights to equal treatment in our health care system.

I'm going to be happy to be able to raise that another time in the House. I'm going to be happy to push the Minister of Health and Community Services to do the right thing, to amend policies and regulations, to ensure that the trans community has access to full and equal health care in our province.

I would like to say that we have come a long way. It has taken a lot of work. It has taken petitions. It has taken letters. It has taken demonstrations. It has taken one-to-one meetings. It has taken all of that to get us to this point. We can be proud, and I'm looking forward to unanimous support for this bill in the House.

Again, sometimes as legislators we just have to be dragged kicking and screaming to do the right things but we have been. We are learning and this has been – I'm very, very happy to support this and I am very proud of what we are doing here today in our House of Assembly.

Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Madam Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise here today and speak to my first piece of legislation here in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: This has been a lifelong dream of mine to work on legislation that will positively change the lives of many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As a member of the Government Services Committee, I feel it's important for me to speak on Bill 7. I'd like to acknowledge the hard work put forward by the Member for St. John's Centre, Gerry Rogers, in advocating for this change which is long overdue.

To amend a phrase coined by Prime Minister Trudeau, because it's 2016, these amendments today formally catch up with a recent human rights ruling. We are finally removing discrimination from gender identification. No longer will a person have to undergo surgery in order to change their gender.

As the Member opposite talked about, and I'm going to be much shorter than her because I'm not an expert but I do feel that any sort of discrimination is wrong. That we move forward and we pass this bill. This amendment goes a long way to protect transgender Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from harassment and discrimination.

As the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services mentioned, this will go a long way in providing safe and sustainable communities. It allows people to be who they are. It allows people to have a piece of identification that actually states who they truly are without any fear of repercussions.

Advocates from the LGBTQ community should be applauded for their hard work in putting this issue in the forefront and allowing Newfoundland and Labrador to catch up with other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta and Nova Scotia.

Service NL staff should also be commended for their hard work in putting this amendment together. They've undergone countless hours of research, reviewing best practices from other jurisdictions and drafting the bill that we have before us here today. They've consulted with the Opposition and Third Party. They've consulted with other groups and they've done their hard work. It's an honour to be here today to speak on this bill. Hopefully, I'm sure we'll get it all passed here shortly.

As I mentioned, we've taken the best practices from other jurisdictions. Applicants can now be evaluated by one of five medical professionals,

more than any other province. This includes a medical practitioner, which include doctors, a registered nurse, nurse practitioner, a psychologist registered under the *Psychologists Act, 2005* or a social worker.

I'm honoured to be able to vote for this bill today and I'm sure Members here will do that same. With that, I'm going to conclude my statement.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to thank everybody for their comments here today in supporting the bill. This is a bill that has been on the radar for a while for a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Member for St. John's Centre has mentioned several times that it has been pushed in the House.

At no time, I must say, did the people on this side – who were in Opposition at the time – ever say this bill should never be brought in the House. We always supported this being brought in the House. Madam Speaker, to show our commitment on this bill, this is one of the first bills we're going to get passed in the House of Assembly as we committed to when we were in Opposition.

I just want to thank everybody. I know the Member opposite, the critic, has spoken very highly on the bill. Also, he is very supportive.

Madam Speaker, as I always said, you always give credit where credit is due. The former government had the bill pretty well ready to go. So I have to say the officials in the other government before the election had the bill almost ready to go. This is a bill that I can say all parties supported, that all parties wanted done and I'm happy today that this is not a Liberal bill, not a PC bill, or NDP bill. This is bill for human rights in Newfoundland and Labrador and I'm proud of this government for bringing it

in. I thank everybody for their support on this bill, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the minister has spoken and closed debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read the second time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009. (Bill 7)

MADAM SPEAKER: The bill has now been read the second time.

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. A. PARSONS: Presently.

On motion, a bill "An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 7)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 8, second reading of Bill 8.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009 now be read a second time.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009, be now read a second time.

Motion, second read of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009.” (Bill 8)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is the amendment to the *Name of Change Act* which goes with the *Vital Statistics Act*, Bill 7. I’m not going to spend any time on this because we all spoke on Bill 7 and this is just to conform with Bill 7 for Bill 8.

Madam Speaker, once again I’ll just take the opportunity for their support in the House for this – as we know, getting through a bill in the House of Assembly all in one day is very difficult, but with the support of everybody it can be done.

Again I will just sit down and let the Members opposite have their words and I will have the Member for St. John’s Centre have her words also. I just want to thank everybody and thank all the speakers here on both sides that have already spoke on the bill, Madam Speaker, because this is a bill that we all want to get done and will be done today.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Again, it’s a pleasure to get here today and be able to speak on this bill also. As the minister just alluded to again, there is great support here in the House. I think that is the reflection on the minister; he’s that type of a guy that gets everybody co-operative in the House. He is doing a good job.

We just went through Bill 7 and in order to do what we wanted to do in that bill, Bill 8 had to be introduced also. That is basically what we are doing here now is changing the age from 19 to 16 and that’s part of what needed to be done to make sure this legislation and these amendments go through.

Very shortly, we will be supporting it 100 per cent because it’s the right thing to do.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I’m just going to add a quick comment as I did on Bill 7 as well. I, too, support the legislation. It’s great to see all Members of the House coming together and working together to advance this legislation. I appreciate the fact that the minister acknowledged our caucus’s role in the past in dealing with this issue as well.

Changing one’s name can be a very empowering experience for a trans person. Reducing the age limit, which we’re doing here through Bill 8, from 19 to 16 is definitely a step in the right direction to becoming a more inclusive society. It recognizes that many trans people struggle with gender dysphoria and changing their name brings them closer to how they choose to identify.

Studies have actually shown that young people are beginning to identify that they are trans at an earlier age. This is the right thing to do, much like Bill 7; it modernizes our legislation. We’re not the first in the country to do this. I’m glad to say I don’t believe we’re the last either. It’s progress. It’s necessary progress, and it’s great our caucus can join with government in supporting this legislation today as well.

Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to totally support Bill 8, the Change of Name Act, and as my colleague before me has stated, this is about modernizing our legislation. It is very interesting to see how this will also harmonize in terms of the age of consent. We do know that a number of children know who they are, and they need to be able to do this in order to be able to live with dignity and justice and fairness and equality.

I also would like to refer back to Bill 7 in that I'm very impressed as well with the protections of children that have been incorporated into that bill. Protections in terms of allowing children to have that self-determination, but also ensuring there is the support they need before they do take many crucial steps.

So, I very much support this legislation and am happy to do so.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL speaks now, he will close debate.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I won't spend long on this. I just want to thank the Member for Cape St. Francis for his comments; the Member for St. John's Centre; the Member for Mount Pearl North; the Member for Bonavista who spoke on the bill; and the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's also who spoke very well on the bill. I thank all Members for that, and I can see a sense there is a concurrence in this hon. House, Madam Speaker, we're all in favour in this bill and we're going to get this bill done – a much needed bill.

I just want to thank everybody on both sides of the House and the Member for St. John's Centre for their support on this bill. It shows, Madam Speaker, when it comes to something so serious all Members do come together for something so important for the dignity of the people in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009. (Bill 8)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a second time. When shall the bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 8)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bills 7 and 8.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is the pleasure of the House that the Committee resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole to consider Bills 7 and 8.

Is it the pleasure of the House that I do now leave the Chair?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Lane): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009.” (Bill 7)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I just have a couple of questions that I’d like to ask. While we feel that confidentiality is ensured in the safety and protection of the people that are applying – and I know in the bill it said that the registrar and the deputy registrar would be the ones who would be handling this – what happens to applicants applying that live outside the area of where the registrar and the deputy registrar are? How do they apply?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we all know, confidentiality is a big part for everybody in this House of Assembly. It is a big part for anybody who makes this application.

Mr. Chair, when the application comes in, they will go to the chair or deputy chair – deputy registrar. When the application comes in it will be directed to those individuals themselves. So this will not be put in – it will be given to those two people with the priority of it. That is in place to ensure that if an application from outside comes in, that it is directed to the chair. On the envelope it will be personal and confidential to the chair or deputy chair.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I know minister has the answer for this.

Mr. Minister, I think it’s important, when we talk about the children less than 16 years old. We know there are a lot of children in the province under 16 years old who are not in the care of their parents. I’m wondering, whether it’s foster children or whatnot, how do they – because they need a requirement for the parents to give their consent. Who else can give the consent on this bill?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is a great question. Where possible, for someone under 16, is to have two parents. If it is not possible to have two parents, whoever is making the application – of course, this will be decided upon. If there is only one person, one parent for some reason, if a second person has passed away or if the second person has moved away and not in contact with the family, then there is provision there to ensure there is one parent.

If the person is in foster care – it is the same now in any legislation – the guardian, who’s the registered guardian of the person, can make the application on behalf of the child. That is in place now for anybody under 16 years of age. If they want to make any application, the guardian, who is put by the court, can make the application and that has to follow the process through the guardian.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Just a little follow-up there, Mr. Chair.

What about children who are also in the care of Child, Youth and Family Services? Can you explain what happens to those children in that circumstance?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, again, for the question. It has to be a permanent guardian. So somebody in Child, Youth and Family Services may be adopted or may have been there for a while, but it has to be a permanent guardian who is appointed through the courts, whoever the guardian is. The guardian can't be, for example, someone in Child, Youth and Family Services if you're there for a week or two weeks. It has to be a permanent guardian.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers – the Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Not to belabour it, I'm just trying to understand it and some of the circumstances. I'm not sure if the minister would know this or maybe we might be able to get the information after. We don't want to hold the bill up.

In the case of foster care, are we right in thinking in a case like that then it would be the director of child welfare who would be the permanent guardian and the decision maker in this regard, or would the foster family or foster parents have the decision-making authority, as they do in many aspects of life of foster children?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. JOYCE: Under the legislation, it would be whoever is designated by the courts as the permanent guardian. If you're in foster care it would be the Director of Child, Youth and Family Services, but if you're adopted and you went through the process, then that person is the

permanent guardian and it is by the court that you are – but if not, it would be Child, Youth and Family Services. If, for example, you're in foster care but you haven't got a permanent guardian, it would be the Director of Child, Youth and Family Services.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 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 Vital Statistics Act, 2009.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: We will now consider Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009." (Bill 8)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clause 2 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 Change Of Name Act, 2009.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bills 7 and 8.

CHAIR: It has been moved that I do leave this Chair and report Bills 7 and 8.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bills 7 and 8 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 and Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Change of Name Act, 2009 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bills be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bills ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, Address in Reply.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise in this hon. House today representing the great District of Labrador West. I first want to thank the residents of Wabush and Labrador City for putting their trust in me and the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador on November 30.

I also want to acknowledge my hon. opponents Nick McGrath of the Progressive Conservative Party and Ron Barron of the New Democratic Party for running great and respectful campaigns. I also want to thank Nick for his past

four years of service to the District of Labrador West.

Winning a provincial election comes with a lot of hard work and dedication from a large group of dedicated people. I am very thankful and proud of my campaign team under the chairmanship of Toby Leon. Because of his leadership and the great individuals we had on our team, we were successful on election night. A campaign can only be successful through good organization and strategic execution of a good plan. I can honestly say our team did a fantastic job. I'm very grateful for the outcome.

Support of family and great friends is always paramount in politics. Thank you to my wife Audrey for believing in me and supporting me on this great journey. To my son Michael, daughter Michelle, their spouses and our five grandchildren, thank you for your love and unwavering support. I am so very proud of all of you.

Mr. Speaker, today Labrador West is experiencing significant challenges, as are all the other areas of the province, but challenges that can be overcome with everyone working towards a common goal. Through co-operation and hard work, challenges can be transformed into opportunities.

The closing of Wabush Mines has had a significant impact on the residents of Wabush and Labrador West in general. I want to first recognize the tremendous impact the closure has had on retirees and the 2,400 pension plan members of Wabush Mines. Not only those in Labrador West, but also those who have chosen to move to other parts of the province, other parts of the country, yes, and indeed, other parts of the world. They are present in all our districts.

They are people who, in many cases, dedicated their entire working career to a company only to see their pensions now reduced by 21 per cent for the unionized workers and 25 per cent for the non-unionized workforce; this by the very same company that continues to operate and reap benefits and profits in other countries. It really does indicate the company's abandonment and lack of compassion for their employees.

It is indeed a sad and unfortunate situation those people find themselves in today. We are talking about pensioners and, in many cases, widows, who have not only seen their pensions reduced, but have also witnessed the cancellation of their health and retirement benefits.

I can assure you and the people of Wabush and Labrador City that our government is working to do what we can to see this injustice addressed. We are supporting our federal counterparts in their efforts to amend federal legislation so that workers are protected in those situations. The *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, better known as CCAA, must be amended so that pensioners are a priority on a creditors list.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have seen booms and busts before. This is no different and there is still reason for hope. The iron ore markets are showing signs of recovery and will eventually rebound to a sustainable level. I am confident that smoke, steam and yes, dust, will someday again rise from the stacks of Wabush Mines.

Our government is very supportive of the ongoing efforts in the potential sale of Wabush Mines. My colleagues, the Premier, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Environment and Conservation and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL have all been deeply involved in this most important issue and will continue to be until there is a resolution.

Mr. Speaker, just a mere stone's throw away, at the Iron Ore Company of Canada, operations are running at capacity with a lofty target of 23 million tonnes of production for 2016. Productivity has improved tremendously and costs have been significantly reduced to sustain the operation at a time when iron ore prices are at their lowest in many, many years.

However, while productivity and costs are being optimized the operation is not without its challenges. Labour relations between the steelworkers union and the company are strained, but progress is being made on that front as well. Again, our government has played a significant role through the input of the Premier, the Minister Responsible for the Labour Relations Agency, the Labour Relations Agency themselves and the efforts of all our Labrador

MHAs. In fact, just a few weeks ago the Premier met with both the president of Local 5795 and the president and CEO of IOC to discuss labour relations and other issues regarding the sustainability of the operation.

Negotiations have begun between the company and the union to address the high number of outstanding grievances and arbitration cases. A sustainable plan is being put in place to get all of the laid-off employees back to work in the near future. To date, 19 of the 29 labourers and janitors who saw their job class eliminated altogether have been recalled. We will continue to support the union's efforts until all of them are back on the job site.

Mr. Speaker, iron ore mining is the backbone of the economy of Labrador West. Because of our mining wealth the region has historically been a significant contributor to the province's economy. We have been mining the rich ore of the Labrador trough since 1954.

Remember Joey's slogan: First ore in '54, with years and years of resources still remaining to be tapped. Mining is our past, mining is our present and mining will continue to be our future; however, it is in times like today that we realize our reliance on mining alone can bring prosperity, but it can also bring many challenges.

That is why we cannot continue down the path of one-industry towns to ensure our sustainability as a region. If there ever was a call to arms for economic diversification – and we heard the Member for Mount Pearl North refer to it today – well, this is it. Our government believes in Labrador West. We will be a partner with all levels of government in its diversification plans.

As an example, one thing Labrador is well known for is its long, cold winters. Unfortunately, we have not sufficiently tapped into the opportunities that may exist within that environment. It is a matter of using those conditions to our advantage.

I am pleased to report there is an industry that has finally taken advantage of Labrador's climatic conditions: the data warehousing industry. Because of the tremendous heat it

produces, the cost of maintaining data storage sites in warmer climates is becoming unsustainable. Well guess what? They are moving north.

We now have two developments, with the possibility of a third, that are moving their operations to Labrador West where the climate and the cost of electricity are much more receptive to their operations. Although they may not generate large numbers of jobs yet, they do generate investment in our communities and employment at a time when each and every job is important. Mr. Speaker, that is the true definition of diversification.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: The opportunities around winter tourism are endless. We have barely scratched the surface in reaching its full potential. Labrador West has some of the best winter tourism attractions in the world with its cross-country ski trails at Menihek, downhill skiing at Smokey Mountain, our White Wolf snowmobile trails and the many other outdoor infrastructures that we have in the region.

Just this past weekend, Smokey held a reunion that saw many of our past residents return for four days of festivities. Our diversification and economic plan will concentrate heavily on developing more of those opportunities.

Speaking of tourism, Labrador West, and Labrador as a whole, has just witnessed the most gruelling snowmobile race in the world, touching all regions of the Big Land: Cain's Quest. A record breaking 37 teams signed up to race with 14 of them crossing the finish line.

This year being the 10th anniversary, saw the first-ever team from outside North America, team Finland. I know the organizers are expanding efforts to attract other international competitors. Hopefully team Finland is just the first of many participants from around the world in future races.

I want to commend the organizers and all the volunteers from across Labrador who worked tirelessly in the past two years to make this event possible. The publicity resulting from Cain's Quest has truly put Labrador on the world stage.

Fans from all over the world were watching the race on their screens as well. From March 1 until the race was over, the cainsquest.com website received hits from 77 different countries, had 76,513 unique visitors and received 1.33 million page views, far surpassing the stats of 2014.

I was in my district for the start and the finish of Cain's Quest. Mr. Speaker, I saw first-hand the economic impact that a race like this can bring to the region. Hotels were full, restaurants were full and the whole town was just abuzz.

On Saturday evening a banquet was held to honour all the participants with Team Maine, team Alberta and team Saskatchewan placing first, second and third respectively. Nevertheless, and I said it at the banquet, all 37 teams are winners for having the courage to enter this gruelling race.

My colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains, has really summed it up best in these few words to the racers: Labrador has once again made superstars out of all of you. Your endurance, your attitude towards your fans, your goodwill toward each other and your sportsmanship is something that will leave a lasting impression on all of us. The quest may be over, but the stories of comradery, sportsmanship, determination, hardship and celebration will last forever.

Mr. Speaker, municipal governments are very important to the sustainability of any region. Nowhere is that more evident today than in Wabush and Labrador City. As a result of the closure of Wabush Mines, the Town of Wabush saw a significant reduction in revenue with the loss of their grant in lieu of taxes. Our province has stepped up to the plate with a three-year funding program to replace that loss. However, without a restart of Wabush Mines or a new major source of revenue, the Town of Wabush will be challenged to meet its future financial and municipal service obligations. I commend Mayor Colin Vardy and his council for taking such a responsible and pragmatic approach to its budgeting challenges, and commit my support to them in meeting the challenges ahead.

This past year, the Town of Labrador City also saw a 15 per cent reduction in its grant in lieu from the Iron Ore Company of Canada, posing a

significant challenge to their 2016 budget. The Minister of Municipal Affairs granted an extension to the Town of Labrador City that resulted in a revised budget containing several cost-cutting measures. Mayor Karen Oldford and her council are also to be commended for their fiscal approach to an unexpected reduction in revenue.

Mr. Speaker, I was born and raised in L'Anse au Clair in the Labrador Straits, in the beautiful District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. I moved to Labrador West from the Labrador coast in 1973, working as a summer student with Wabush Mines and proceeded on to a 30-year career with the Iron Ore Company of Canada. It was there that I met my wife, Audrey. We raised a family, and we are still very proud today to call Labrador West our home.

After a number of years of volunteering with the Kinsmen organization, I became involved in municipal politics in Labrador City in 1989 and enjoyed 20 years on the Labrador City town council, eight of them as mayor. I also had the privilege of serving on the provincial municipal body, then known as Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, now Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, serving as president from 2007 to 2009.

I'm also very proud to have been recognized by my federal peers by being inducted into the honour roll of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It was through my involvement in municipal politics that I first met many of my colleagues now sitting here in the House of Assembly. I've always considered municipal government as the first level of government and the government closest to the people. It is where many provincial and federal politicians first got their training wheels removed.

Mr. Speaker, many people have come and gone in Labrador West since the incorporation of the town 56 years ago, but many still remain. I want to recognize the pioneers and seniors who contributed to the growth of the region and have chosen to make Labrador West their retirement home.

Labrador City celebrated its 50th anniversary of incorporation in 2011 and Wabush will be doing the same in 2017. Their contributions cannot be

forgotten. As in many other communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, seniors are a very important part of any community profile. Labrador West is no different. Seniors remain a very active group within the community and continue to contribute to the social well-being of Labrador West. As a government, we need to be respectful of their contributions to society and recognize them for their dedication and service.

Communities are built on volunteers. This week being volunteer appreciation week, I want to recognize all of the volunteers, both past and present, who have made significant contributions to Wabush and Labrador City. Labrador West has always been known for its tremendous volunteer base through service clubs, sports groups and many other non-profit organizations. The contributions made by these organizations could never be measured in dollars and cents. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they are priceless.

The recent boom in the mining industry resulted in a significant shift in demographics in Labrador West. As a result of record employment opportunities, we saw many young families move there and invest heavily in their futures. Housing prices soared to record levels, only to see them fall quickly with the sudden downturn, leaving many families in very challenging situations.

The boom also saw the arrival of many members of the Filipino community through the temporary foreign worker program. Many of them have gained their citizenship and have chosen to make Labrador West their permanent home. They have integrated well into the community and have earned the respect of all our residents.

Despite the recent downturn, the future remains bright for Labrador West. We have experienced downturns in the past because of the cyclical nature of the mining industry. The future is in our hands. By working together we will weather the storm. We've been knocked down before, and we will pick ourselves back up again.

I look forward to working with my Labrador colleagues: the Member for Torngat Mountains, Randy; the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Lisa Dempster; the Member for Lake

Melville, Minister Perry Trimper; the Premier, as Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs; and the MP for Labrador, Ms. Yvonne Jones, as we address the challenges that lay ahead. Together with our Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs staff, we will be a stronger Labrador. As a result, we will be a stronger province and we will have a stronger tomorrow.

In closing, I want to thank once again the residents of Labrador West for giving me this great opportunity to represent you in the House of Assembly, together with my constituency assistant, who we often tend to forget, Sabrina Hunt. We are here to help you in any way we can. I am very impressed with her accomplishments in the past three months.

To the residents of Labrador West, your issues are our issues. Together we will find solutions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize our next speaker, I remind all Members that they should refer to other Members of the House by district or title and not by name.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour and a privilege to rise here today in this hon. House and address the Members of this caucus, Members opposite, Members of the Third Party and all others watching. Although I've had the opportunity to stand before and read a Member's statement, I find myself standing here today with a whirlwind of emotions.

To be one of 40 who will help shape this province for the coming years is not to be underestimated. Mr. Speaker, looking back over the past 30 years until now, I muse when I think of where one's life may lead them.

I grew up in Greenspond, a small isolated community on the Northeast Coast. It was once known as the capital of Bonavista North. Being the largest island, we served the islands around the bay. Greenspond was founded in 1697 and boasted over 2,000 people in the early 1900s. Back then we had a magistrate, a courthouse, a jail, a doctor, a nurse, probably one of the first Banks of Montreal, a customs office and a constable station.

In the '70s when I grew up, things were different. Growing up on an isolated island had its challenges. I added a little footnote there – not a lot of girls. I don't know if I'm allowed to say that or not.

Greenspond had no running water in the winter months. Everyone used buckets and a sled. There was not one of us who couldn't carry two five-gallon buckets of water with a hoop at least 500 metres without putting it down. It was usually a contest to bring water.

We quickly learned to improvise. When you broke something, you soon figured out you couldn't just buy a part anywhere. You had to go somewhere and make a part. One time a half a dozen of us got together and built a car out of two 10-speed bikes, some old basic iron and a Ski-Doo motor. It all went well until two boys decided to turn different ways. Little did I know these early skills would come in handy later on.

After finishing high school – I should know it – I had a brief stint at MUN. My brother Clyde and I spent a summer fishing, another summer in the fish plant, and then off to trade school with hopes to be a power engineer. I completed that and no crystal ball could have predicted me here today. I went into the workforce at a time when the baby boomers were in their prime and jobs were hard to find. There were no megaprojects in this province, and Alberta then was a world away. Power engineering would have to wait.

Mr. Speaker, a job came up at the town office, and at 21 years old I was offered the job of town clerk managing the Town of Greenspond. My then girlfriend was in nursing, so I decided to take the job until she finished, then I was going to retire a kept man. But she said no and 29 years later I was still there.

Mr. Speaker, don't think that for 29 years I limited myself to Greenspond and the then 500 people. I spent the first year or two advising the town council trying to bring the then financially overburdened town out of the red. I will never forget it, my first week on the job the town owed over \$10,000 with not a cent in the bank. We had to get a grant from – as everybody called it then – the government to pay the light bill, the phone bill and a few others. My first cheque with the town bounced.

There was no water and sewer in Greenspond at the time, so I toiled on working away with every day being another step forward. Believe it or not, I loved my job, but we could not fully settle down until my girlfriend then, and now wife, Beverley, found a job in nursing. She found a job at Brookfield Hospital, so we built a family and a life in Greenspond. I loved my job and I devoted my time to it.

Now I should also note Greenspond had just been connected to the mainland by a causeway. People were flocking to see this tiny community. Most would think it's a good thing, but please remember the roads in Greenspond were little more than footpaths. My brother and I spent more time directing traffic and pulling people back on the road than anything else.

We started water and sewer. To say Greenspond is a solid rock would not be an understatement. Blasting with the vast majority of homes on wooden shores led to many calls to the office and my home. You could say it thickened my skin.

I became an on-site inspector. I became almost a master of all the little things at the time. The town purchased an old loader for snow clearing, so my brother, Clyde, who was always by my side – I remember him calling me early one morning. The fuel pump was broke and the snow was half a storm. So we rigged up a gas tank to the back of the loader. I sat up on the back squeezing the ball while Clyde cleared the snow. Now you can see where my story of building the bike paid off.

Thanks to my parents, Stuart and Mellie, they instilled in me the need to volunteer. I had dabbled in volunteer committees for a couple of years, but at 23 years old I jumped in full time. I

became the fire chief and chair of the Recreation Committee. It was a bit unnerving to chair a meeting with everyone else much older than me watching on.

Then I got onboard the Come Home Year Committee. We had just built a new regional stadium. I became part of the centre loop and recreation committee. Basically there I became the voice and face of the stadium, taking many of the blows from running that.

I somehow fitted in marriage and found time to raise a daughter. My wife Beverley would always say: Derrick, please let somebody else do it this time. Why can't you just sit back and enjoy yourself? I was always the one to be into it up to my eyes, full-speed ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I truly enjoyed my job and the people I met while I was clerk manager of Greenspond. There were times when I put Greenspond on the map. You may not believe this, but there was a time I was too shy to say my name at a public gathering.

Then I was encouraged to run for the central director of Professional Municipal Administrators. They were in a dilemma at the time. From there I went on to be the vice-president and finally president of PMA. Being president gave me the opportunity to meet many administrators and councillors from across Newfoundland and Labrador. I got to represent our municipal administrators across Canada. I credit so much to PMA. It gave me the opportunity to listen to the problems and successes of other communities across the province.

I later learned our problems are consistent across Canada. I remember going to my first interprovincial meeting. It was in Victoria, BC. I walked in thinking what can I bring to the table here. I walked out a couple of hours later with everybody wanting a copy of what we had accomplished here in this province, a copy of our core program that we had developed for the administrators. I can't lie; I had a smile on my face a mile long.

Somewhere in that time frame I joined the local Cape Freels Development Association and assumed the position of director, vice-president

and president. Here we tackled many local issues from walking trails to signage, to building repairs to child care centres, to the stadium repairs.

Through it all, I had the urge to get into politics. I mentioned it to my family and friends many times and I'll be honest, most called me nuts. Before my father and uncle passed away, I had many conversations with them. My father would say: You're all right where you are to, my son. He was always content with his lot in life. Now my uncle Mike, he was a political junkie. He encouraged me but I'm going to be honest to the Members opposite, he would rather I was probably sitting over there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. BRAGG: Our daughter Allison was still in school and she was involved in every school sport and activity known. We spent more time on the road than we did home and my political thoughts were put on the backburner. Through it all, my desire to get into politics got stronger; many people encouraged me. Beverley and I had several discussions and with her support, we agreed to meet Scott Simms and discuss for him to give me the insight into the world of politics. Scott gave me the short version of it.

Another year passed and finally word was spreading about the upcoming election. I was not sure how to proceed. Then one night my phone rang and Vera Barbour was on the other end. Everybody I'm sure on this side would know Vera Barbour and probably a lot of people on that side would know Vera Barbour. Vera is probably the guru for the Liberal Party for sure. So she gave me the extra push.

From there Beverley, Allison and I worked night and day for me to secure the nomination for Bonavista North. Many people came forward to help me for that nomination and after winning the nomination race, we looked forward to the anticipated election. I guess you know where this story goes; Bonavista North sank into the larger District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels. Not only was Bonavista North in the new district, it included Hare Bay-Dover to the west along with Gander Bay North, Horwood, Port Albert, Stoneville, Change Islands and Fogo Island to the north.

Once more I faced the nomination race and, yes, I won that one too. Then it was figuring out how to run a campaign. I had a note there that I'm sure everybody could write a book on running a campaign because that was a challenge. The area got so much bigger with so many new people but, at the end of the day, it was all worth it. I can't thank enough the people who came forward to help. People that I didn't even know going into it came forward to help me.

People gave freely of their time. I will be forever grateful to these people who helped me win. My campaign team were superb. Most people have one campaign chair; I had three co-chairs.

Today I send special thanks to my wife Beverley and our daughter Allison for their support. Without their support, none of this would have been possible. To the people of Fogo Island – Cape Freels, thank you for your support because without your faith in me, I would not be standing here today.

Before I clue up I would like to add, the name of our district Fogo Island – Cape Freels is really not representative of the district it represents. Depending on where you look at it, it either ends or begins in the scenic area of Hare Bay, followed by the Dover Fault. Then it's through Centreville-Wareham-Trinity, Indian Bay where you will find some of the best fishing ponds on the Island; a side bar out to historic Greenspond; visit the Barbour living village in New-Wes-Valley; walk the sandy beaches from Cape Freels, Lumsden, Deadman's Bay down to Musgrave Harbour; a visit to Aspen and Ladle Cove for a feed of lobsters. In Carmanville, Noggin Cove and Frederickton you will find shipwrecks and boat launches. Then it's on to Davidsville, Main Point, Gander Bay South and Gander Bay North for some of the biggest salmon fishing grounds around. That is inshore, by the way.

In Horwood, Stoneville and Port Albert you will find that logging was once a way of life. In Farewell you will wait in line with the numerous visitors from all over who can't wait to see Change Islands with its fishing stages. Finally, or as I said depending on where you come from, beginning, you come to Fogo Island where fishing is vibrant, punts are everywhere and they boast of an exotic inn fit for the prime minister.

That my fellow colleagues is how I got here and a little about the district I plan to serve to the best of my ability. I can only hope this political life can be as rewarding to me as my past experience with my job and volunteer work.

A lady once asked me: Derrick, will you change politics or will politics change you? I'm guessing only time will tell. I'm anticipating a little of each. I look forward to serving this province and the people of Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the Member for the District of Exploits and challenge him to top that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself humbled and honoured to rise today in this the people's House as the Member for the beautiful and historic District of Exploits.

At this time, I also would like to acknowledge the contributions of all former MHAs in this hon. House and extend congratulations to the newly minted ones.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to my wife, Beverley, and our children, Jessica, Matthew and Emily. If I had been a sailor, they surely would have been my lighthouse keepers. They were beacons of hope with their unwavering support in charting the course of my political ambitions. They guided my safe passage which culminated today with being here amongst our ship's crew of 40.

To my parents, siblings, extended family, friends, campaign team and to the people of my district, please accept my sincere thanks. I wish to assure all of my constituents of my pledge to provide fair and equal representation while working tirelessly on your behalf.

Mr. Speaker, I was born and raised in the seaport Town of Botwood, which is perched on the southwestern shore of the Bay of Exploits. Botwood was once known as Ship Cove, the same Ship Cove where the British brig *HMS Grasshopper* anchored during the winter of 1819-1820.

The *Grasshopper* was under the command of Captain David Buchan. He was responsible for safeguarding and reuniting Demasduit with her people. Regrettably, she passed away on January 8, 1820 aboard the *Grasshopper*. Today, the remains of Demasduit and her husband, Nonosabusut, lie in a museum in Scotland.

In the Speech from the Throne, my government made a commitment to repatriate Demasduit and Nonosabusut to their ancestral home, our home. I encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take ownership of this just cause to ensure, without further delay, the repatriation of their remains.

Mr. Speaker, my character and my convictions have been shaped over time by my upbringing in a family of seven. I remain true to those convictions with Bev and our three children. Since childhood, I have been an avid sports enthusiast. My involvement in sports has ranged from playing to coaching to administration and encompassed local, regional and provincial involvement.

In addition to my love of sports, I have committed myself to the betterment of my community. I was first elected as a councillor in Botwood in 1997. Then in 2001, I was elected as mayor, a posting I proudly held until November 30, 2015.

My years in council provided numerous opportunities for me to serve, as well as chair, a vast array of boards and committees ranging in diversity from social to economic. I worked for four employers previous to my being elected last year. I spent nearly 30 of those years with Abitibi Consolidated and its predecessors until several years ago when operations ceased.

I know first-hand about job loss. I know first-hand about job loss when you have not carried your family over the finish line. I know first-

hand about being mayor while having co-workers pour their hearts out to you.

Little did I know this odyssey would take me from a crane operator's chair loading newsprint in the Port of Botwood to the mayor's chair, to finding myself here today taking my chair in the House of Assembly.

Looking back, it seems like a long time ago I decided to seek the nomination for Exploits. Forty seats looked daunting, and my supporters sensed my apprehension and rallied behind me, assuring me this was my time and not to find myself months or years out saying, what if?

So here we are today, two party nominations and a general election later. These are just some of the experiences that have shaped my character. I look forward to the upcoming journey and the role that you, my new co-workers, will play in the shaping of my character as an hon. Member of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to our government and all House Members striving to ensure that the people in our district and in our region have a fair and equal opportunity to reap benefits from our bountiful resources.

In communities such as Bishop's Falls, Botwood, Grand Falls-Windsor, Cottrell's Cove, Fortune Harbour, Glover's Harbour, Leading Ticks, Moore's Cove, Northern Arm, Norris Arm North, Norris Arm South, Peterview, Phillips Head, Pleasantview, Point Leamington, Point of Bay, Sandy Point and Wooddale. Whether it's our traditional assets such as forestry, fishing, mining, agriculture and hydro, or manufacturing, tourism, aquaculture, offshore oil, IT sector, service industry, along with health care, education and other government services, the District of Exploits has and continues to be open for business.

Mr. Speaker, our district can, in full or in part, lay claim to being home to significant historical events, places and firsts, as well as a testament to God's handiwork: the mainstay and heartland of the native Beothuks; the mighty Exploits River, home to the best salmon fishing in Eastern Canada; the first pulp and paper newsprint operation and hence, the beginning of our province's industrial revolution; the first

non-stop commercial transatlantic flight; the Grand Falls-Windsor Cataracts, owners and holders of a record-setting 14 Herder championships; Alex Faulkner, the first Newfoundlander and Labradorian to play in the NHL; and Bob Dean, the first Newfoundlander and Labradorian to play on a Memorial Cup team. These are but a few of the many accomplishments and historical events that make Exploits what it is today. I urge all of you to visit with us and encounter the Exploits experience.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to extend heartfelt thanks to many, many government staff here and throughout the province for being so cordial and helpful to me during this transition period. To the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, conveyed to you are my many thanks for seeing me as a credible candidate. To our district association in Exploits my many, many thanks. I wish for Premier Ball, our caucus, our PC and NDP colleagues, as well as our staffers to all know how very much I am looking forward to serving with all of you.

The goal of a politician should be to right wrongs, to make things better and to be genuine in the hope that his or her successor raises the bar even higher still. To the good people of the great District of Exploits thanks for your vote of confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour to speak in this House and reflect on the circumstances, experience and support that has me standing before you all today. In the next few minutes – I guess in the next 18 minutes – I'd like to speak about the strategy or perhaps just the fate, but certainly the lessons learned to bring me to this point in my life.

I might suggest my path to this House is not typical, but on the other hand perhaps all 40 of us can say the same. We all have our own unique stories that reflect on the diversity and the opportunity that exists within Newfoundland and Labrador.

I was born in Nova Scotia and I grew up in a small village called Clementsport. I'm the sixth generation of a German Hessian soldier who was also a forester, by the way, like myself. He settled in the area after the American Revolution. By the way, he was actually captured in Trenton, New Jersey by Washington and spent most of the war in prison, and then they shipped him up to Nova Scotia. So there you go.

With that upbringing of hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits, in combination with some very good teachers, set me on a career path science. In 1979, I headed to the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton to obtain a degree in forestry and wildlife management. Following graduation, I began a routine of working various research contracts throughout the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario. I did that for several years.

Then in 1987, I heard about an opportunity in this great province. I secured this opportunity in Labrador. It was around conducting research in association with the environmental assessment of a proposed NATO base at Goose Bay. This position was with a company called Jacques Whitford. It was supposed to be temporary, but I was looking for northern adventure so I packed up all my belongings in my Ford Ranger and headed to St. John's to report to work.

I'm going to start sounding like the Member behind me here now in a second. I arrived in Port aux Basques in June of 1987. I'm home. Thinking that all the campers in the gravel pits were an indication that the provincial parks were sold out, I spent my first night in a gravel pit as well. Thinking I had to avail of this overflow option, not understanding the concept of gravel pit camping. So within a few hours, I was introduced to the wonderful hospitality that truly distinguishes this province.

The next night, I arrived in St. John's and set up living arrangements. Where else would a guy set

up but in Pippy Park? It is an ironic twist of faith that I find myself now as the minister responsible for this park and enjoy every day a great view of this place that served as my first set of accommodations for my office at environment and conservation.

Languages have always fascinated me. I found that my interest and abilities in this regard have assisted me in the development of my career. Growing up in Nova Scotia and surrounded by the Acadian culture, I was a supporter of the move to enshrine French and English in our national identity. I pursued studies in French throughout high school and later at the Université Laval in Quebec City.

Par exemple, j'étais en train de travailler au Québec quand j'ai reçu une offre d'emploi associée avec un grand étude environnementale au sujet des vols militaires à basses altitudes. Il y avait une grande opportunité puis j'ai commencé avec le grand aventure que c'est Terre Neuve et Labrador.

These additional language capabilities assisted me into securing work beyond that first three-month position that was offered back in 1987.

Reflecting back, I'm also old enough to remember the excitement and mystery around the very famous 1972 hockey series between the Soviet Union and Canada. I always had an interest in Russia and as Perestroika and Glasnost became concepts of international thawing, I found myself beginning to work in a variety of locations throughout the former Soviet Union starting in 1990. It certainly was an interesting time. With a language and cultural understanding edge, I stood out amongst my peers and became the director for Russian operations for the company.

(Speaks Russian.)

So I enjoyed 14 years of adventure and professional experience working for CIDA, the United Nations and the World Bank throughout that vast land.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. TRIMPER: A highlight was joining the Premier and other business representatives from Newfoundland and Labrador on the Team Canada mission to Russia in 2002. There we were, 30 years later at a grand banquet in the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow having lunch with famous hockey players like Tretiak, Cournoyer and so on, all from that very famous Summit Series. It was indeed quite a meal. We were certainly in a good mood as Newfoundland's own Iceberg Vodka company and their representation had just secured a major distribution deal in a land where vodka reigns supreme.

Another example of the kind of fate that I reflect on is how I came to meet my wife Caroline. While working seasonally in Labrador and living in St. John's in 1990 some friends invited me to a Taoist Tai Chi Club for some exercise. I met her on that very first class and I always joked to Caroline's parents that I always believed they thought she might find a nice Chinese guy there. Well, that didn't work out according to their plan but it did result in my life-long partner and my number one supporter.

So my wife is Chinese. She was born in Hong Kong. Given – you might know the operation – I'm the Hong's only son in law – this is over in Hong's Takeout – I still retain the title of being number one in their eyes. Joking aside, her parents Lan and Yan Quan William Hong operated Hong's Takeout on Torbay Road for many years – I believe it was about 30 years. They proved that a strong work ethic, attention to quality and care for your clients can secure a successful position in society, even as immigrants to this country.

A couple of years ago as I was pulling back on my career as a principle scientist with Stantec Consulting, I found I still had plenty of energy to give to a variety of important causes. I was involved in the Chamber Commerce, the Great Labrador Canoe Race, a bunch of sporting, economic development, and so on – still lots of energy. So it was actually the MP for Labrador, Yvonne Jones, and others, that started me down a different path of serving society. So in the spring of 2014 I started.

As momentum built in the months leading up to the election, so now it was a new feeling of

being humbled by the volunteers. It is interesting, several of us have noted this week that it is Volunteer Week. Well, as a guy who liked to volunteer all of his life, I found it very humbling that people were now volunteering to help me in this political direction. Volunteering is one of the most important ways we can give back to society. Both my wife and I have thoroughly enjoyed the response and appreciation that comes as a result of the sense of giving.

I was and remain amazed by the effort of so many people that just gave of their time during the election campaign. This was very much a different feeling. Some of them were busy. Frankly, some of them were ill, and some of them were gravely ill. Others were just people I didn't know well. But they all showed up, and they showed up every day and helped me at the doorstep. I know that I will always remember this sense of indebtedness to them and the residents of my district, certainly if I am going to ensure I do my best to support them every single day.

It was also a great honour to have my parents, June and Wendell, join me in these last days of the election campaign. They have spent their lives working on numerous provincial and federal campaigns. Their advice and support was greatly appreciated. I do remember my father kissing Margaret Trudeau once in the early '70s. I thought he was going to leave the family, but anyway, he did stay, and that's good.

A few names I'd like to mention, if I may, a couple of key people. My campaign manager Henry Windeler; the barber across the street who was just a great support, Henry White; Bridget Murphy; Michelle Baikie; Bernice Tracey; Max Butler; Heber Keats; and very many others all showed up day after day. It was a great team; it was a lot of fun.

There are two people in particular that I would like to mention, who are both, unfortunately, no longer with us. One is uncle Max Winters, a well-respected Inuit elder who provided sage advice in making sure that I reached out to the people and learned to speak for the people. As he battled cancer, he somehow found the energy to visit me regularly to discuss these issues.

Uncle Max was a Habs fan and thoroughly enjoyed a visit from the then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, regaling the triumphs of Les Canadiens. I decided not to tell on that afternoon – they were having so much fun – that I was actually a Bruins fan.

The other very important person who we've lost in the last little while who helped me a lot is Dee Wells. She was my campaign coach. She just came to me about a year ago, started exploring all matter of presence and communication and how you can aspire to be an effective representative and the importance of being grounded. She was tragically killed in an accident just a few days before the election. Her wisdom will always live on with me.

So here I am, a Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Lake Melville, some 29 years after I first showed up with my Ford Ranger in this wonderful province, and pursuing this career of adventure. The question is now: How do I give back?

Over the last few years I've been thinking about how decision making could be much more effective if we could think about the implications of our decisions over a much longer period.

Last week, I spent a few days with Carolyn Bennett, the Minister for Indigenous and Northern Affairs. She talked about how effective Aboriginal leadership considers the implications of their decisions, seven generations out. In many ways this analogy equates to the concept of sustainability – something I've worked with all of my career.

My proposal, in my district, is to develop a long-term plan. I'm referring to the strategy as plan Labrador. I'm working with various organizations, groups and individuals throughout Lake Melville to solicit answers to three questions. Number one: Where do you want to be in 25 years? What does that look like? How do we get there? Then working backwards the next question I'm asking is: How should we accomplish, over the next four years, the mandate of this government? How should we get there? What can we do? Then, finally I'm asking: What are their immediate priorities?

This information is coming in now. We're reaching out across Churchill Falls, Northwest River, Sheshatshiu, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the great old community of Mud Lake. We're compiling the feedback. I'm proposing to present the information in my first newsletter. Subsequent newsletters would then serve as a report card for documenting and sharing progress toward the answers of these three questions. I believe this structure could serve any location in the province, thinking strategically and looking further out than just a few years.

Infrastructure needs are great throughout Labrador. With its role as the administrative, transportation and political hub of the region, Lake Melville needs to have an organized approach to decision making. The Trans-Labrador Highway, for example, is not just a connector road in the region. It is actually the main artery through which this entire province will be able to access goods and services from Central Canada. Until the highway and the crossing of the Strait of Belle Isle are complete, this artery will remain severed, or at least hampered with limited circulation.

The resolution of outstanding land claims by the Innu Nation and the NunatuKavut Community Council will bring stability to the region and a sense of purpose for thousands of my constituents. The advancement of the Nunatsiavut Government demonstrates how the Aboriginal people of the province can make a positive contribution if they are supported and if they are given the opportunity.

The presence of these three Aboriginal groups, Newfoundlanders who made their way North to work on the construction or operation of the Goose Bay air base, or other construction, other Canadians and many European military personnel who decided to stay after their tours of duty on the Wing, plus a variety of other cultures, really give us a very diverse population.

Each of the five communities I just mentioned is unique and adds further diversity in terms of needs and desires. Access to facilities and services remain a challenge for Lake Melville. Despite the central location, the cost of travel, particularly by air, is prohibitive yet necessary,

particularly when seeking specialized health care.

There are many other important issues in Lake Melville, from the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric development, finding a role for the Paddon Home, creation of a wellness centre, stability and securement of an operational requirement at 5 Wing Goose Bay, support for the underground mining expansion at Voisey's Bay, support for the mining colleagues in Labrador West and so on.

These, and so many other issues, in Lake Melville and throughout Labrador will require close coordination. I am very pleased that the Premier has formed a Labrador caucus in which the four MHAs that my colleague from Lab West just referred to from the Big Land are all able to tackle important regional issues together. Ultimately, if we are to succeed, I suggest that a litmus test would be to ask our future generations whether they feel options are available to them for the youth of Labrador or any other region of this province.

If I may, I would just like to comment about my three colleagues. I'm getting to know everybody in the caucus. The Member for Torngat Mountains and I actually used to spend a great deal of time in a helicopter doing waterfowl surveys together. If you want to see a man who's very capable in the field, it's that gentleman over in the corner.

My other colleague from Lab West, we've had many competitions in debate, but mostly around the golf course and speaking about different bets and so on. We continue to have a lot of fun together.

Finally, my other colleague in Labrador, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair; I was telling her when she was helping me a lot on the campaign that she shouldn't be afraid of dogs. She had this fear of them and I was helping her to overcome that. Well, on the very last hour of the campaign – that Sunday before the election, so the 29th – the last house, I'm going up to hang a door knocker and there was a dog barking. It was a good Liberal supporter so I thought I needed to get there. Everyone was concerned. Anyway, I still approached the door and that dog bit me. It bit me twice. So it can happen.

On the 13th of December, I was invited by the Premier to join him at the Cabinet table. In my responsibility for Environment and Conservation, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, Labour Relations Agency, the Multi-Material Stewardship Board and Francophone Affairs, I am proposing to conduct myself in a manner consistent with my career to date; namely, that decisions should be guided by principals, factual information and/or science first. In other words, objectively driven, then implemented with the appropriate energy and emotion.

I believe this is another aspect of the transparency that our party campaigned on and one that I am proud to contribute towards. Whether it be ensuring wise decision making regarding resource development, the protection of resources such as drinking water, wildlife resources or natural areas, or joining the Premier and the prime minister in addressing climate change, communication of the rationale for action will be important if we are to seek the co-operation of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Finally, I want to thank the very good support of my constituency assistant, Bonnie Learning, and my executive assistant, Ian Murphy. I also want to thank the supporters, residents and, yes, even the critics in the District of Lake Melville. They keep you very honest.

We all want what is best for the area and for the province. Working together will help us achieve our dreams. I look forward to the coming years.

Nakummek – Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

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

This is the first opportunity I've had to thank the wonderful people of St. John's West for giving me the opportunity to work on their behalf in the House of Assembly. I want to thank them for the

mandate they have given me to represent them, to advocate on their behalf and to ensure their concerns are represented within this House and within our government.

I consider it a great honour to represent them and their interests and to serve our province. I will work hard every day to ensure they are well-represented. My commitment to the people of St. John's West is to always work hard with integrity and openness, and always in their best interests.

Mr. Speaker, St. John's West has been represented by such notable people as Joseph Smallwood, William Adams, John Crosbie, Rex Gibbons, to name but a very few. They have all conducted themselves honourably in this House and I will work to their ideals.

I want to recognize the many volunteers, especially as this is Volunteer Week, who worked so diligently to ensure a healthy democracy. Their efforts are appreciated by all who sit in the Legislature and all those who offer themselves for public service. After spending weeks on the campaign trail and months in preparation, it is humbling to see democracy in action, and to appreciate the ability of the people of the province to effect change.

I'd also like to specifically thank the volunteers of my own campaign. They spent many days and nights knocking on doors during the campaign. They spent an incredible amount of time talking and speaking with the residents of St. John's West. I want to especially thank the residents of St. John's West who welcomed me so much into their homes for great conversations about how we can improve this beautiful province of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of representing the people of St. John's West from 2008 to 2011 as the Member of Parliament for St. John's South – Mount Pearl. Today, I have the honour of representing them again in this hon. House.

St. John's West is home to a diverse group of people and service groups. It's home to the Cowan Heights neighbourhood watch association, the West Heights Tenants Association, the Parkside Community Centre and the Shrine Club, to name but a few.

I've heard from the people of St. John's West on their concerns about health care, education, affordable housing, infrastructure, safety and security, and a range of other issues facing seniors and young families alike. What the people of the province and the people of St. John's West want is a stronger economy, more opportunities, the best education and improved health care.

We are joined together in this House in a common purpose, to improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Let us focus on ensuring that the decisions we make reflect the needs of our citizens. We should remind ourselves that we are here on behalf of the people. Let us always be reminded of and always do what is right on behalf of the citizens of our province.

By way of introduction, I am a first generation Canadian, as I'm sure a lot of people are in this room today, and an eighth generation Newfoundlander and Labradorian. I am proud to have the opportunity to contribute to building our great province.

Both my mother and my father have instilled in me a sense of responsibility to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador develops along a successful path. They also instilled in me a tremendous value in our community and how important it is to contribute. As I was growing up I was always quoted Churchill, when Winston Churchill said: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

I listened intently over the years to my father-in-law, Patrick Coady, who sadly lost his life to the sea many years ago, about 20 years ago now. He used to engage me in incredibly knowledgeable debates and discussions about how we can be a better province. What we can do to improve the fishery. What we can do to improve education. What we can do to improve the lives of the people of this province. I'm so grateful for those experiences and the information that has been passed down to me by my father-in-law, my mother-in-law, my parents about the sense of responsibility to this place and also to the sense of what can be achieved in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm sure there are many people in this House who have been asked the questions, why are we involved in politics? The start of my political interest was from a very young age. I recall going to Ottawa as a 15-year-old as part of Adventure and Citizenship Program that was through Rotary at the time. I was able to sit in the House of Commons and listen to what it meant to be a Member of the House, what a parliamentarian does. From that age of 15, I decided that I would like to serve one day, working towards a better province and a better country. I am honoured and proud to be here today to do just that on behalf of the great citizens of St. John's West.

Through the course of my life I've been an entrepreneur and a business person. I'm a past chair of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, governor now of the Canadian Chamber, past-president of the St. John's Board of Trade, and sat on a number of boards, everything from the Board of Genome Canada, the Public Policy Forum, the St. John's Airport Authority, to name a few. I've always taken away from those experiences what it meant to the people of this province, what those experiences could mean in terms of enriching and developing activities for this province.

There was a time in my career when I was sitting on one side of the desk asking the government to do something. I remember thinking to myself at the time, if you really want to do something, if you really want to have an impact, I should be sitting on the other side of the desk.

I encourage many people to consider public life. If they really want to achieve what they think is a better vision for their province, for their country, for their communities, they should seek to sit in public office. I remember thinking to myself then, that if I could achieve that goal I would be able to fulfil some of the things that I was asking government to do.

I have a great deal of respect for anyone who puts their name forward in public service at any level of government. This past general election we had about 29 per cent of candidates who put their names forward that were women. I certainly think that we should have more female candidates and I'd certainly like to see more

females, more women represented in the House of Assembly, in the House of Commons, in city council, in any aspect in our life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Thank you.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's incumbent upon all of us to encourage people to enter political life, to show them how they can enter political life. In particular, I think we should encourage women to do the same. I note how many women – and my hon. colleague sitting to my right today was on municipal council for many years serving as a mayor, and I think how many women today are serving in municipal roles that we could encourage to become Members of this House of Assembly.

I know my colleague to the left has a very important role within our government, and I'd like to encourage more and more women to seek public office. I'd like to encourage more and more people to seek public office. I think it's incumbent upon all of us to try and help them do so.

We have to create the right environment for women to be involved in politics. I think over the next number of years I'd like to see changes to the way we operate the House to make it a little bit more family friendly so that we can entice the next generation to join us here in the House of Assembly. I think we have a great opportunity to make a better society when we open the doors and try and encourage more people to be here.

During the general election and since forming government, I've heard many concerns about the serious and difficult financial situation facing the province – almost \$2 billion in deficit this year, and growing. I've heard countless times questions about how we ended up in this unprecedented financial situation, especially when we've had a time of oil revenues in this province.

We are facing significant challenges that will require collective leadership and vision and the engagement of the public. Together, our government hopes to lead our province toward a more sustainable economic future. I think this is

going to be critical. It's going to be difficult, but it will be critical to ensuring our future prosperity.

Now I'm fortunate enough to have been assigned the task of Minister of Natural Resources, as well as Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement. In the office of Natural Resources I'm going to be focusing activities on laying the foundation of a well-planned, well-managed resource development, which I think is going to be incredibly important for the future of our province – built on the principles of innovation, excellence, sound business and regulatory practices.

In this regard, one of our government's plans is to create an oil and gas industry development council consisting of government officials, as well as industry stakeholders. I see this council providing and determining a long-term vision for the province's oil and gas industry. I think they will provide input on creating a more sustainable and competitive industry, and ensuring we move expeditiously from discovery to production. I think this is going to be critically important as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, because we want to have a strong, vibrant economy, and this is one way this project can give us benefits under our agreements and ensure we have the goals aligned to ensure that vibrant economy.

In regard to offshore exploration and development, regulatory certainty and maintaining an attractive and stable business environment for operators and investors is critical to the long-term success of our province's oil and gas industry. Our government is committed to streamlining the processes for regulatory approvals and certification for establishing the royalty regimes necessary for future developments and pursuing options for exploration development.

We have a vast energy resource providing a competitive advantage in attracting industrial development and energy security. With our 2D seismic that has been taking place over the last number of years we've identified 350 prospects in our offshore oil. That is tremendous opportunity. It really is a frontier for the world.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also committing to promoting growth in the mining industry of the province. The mining industry remains a valuable contributor to the provincial economy, with strong potential for recovery and growth in the coming years. We may see, at this moment, a dip in our commodity prices, challenges in the global markets, but I do believe, as we've seen in the past, that will recover and we will continue to have a vibrant mining industry.

We will encourage the expansion of mining operations in the province and we'll consult with industry to explore the possibility of venture capital opportunities, and continue to fund prospector grants throughout the province. In the months and years to come, we will fulfil our commitments of building on the trust placed in us on November 30, 2015.

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to say a few words to my family. I want to acknowledge my own family and the contributions they have made. As many Members of this House know, public service impacts our families in many ways. My family has always supported me. And this truly is a family choice, a choice to give back.

For example, my sister flew down from British Columbia to help me going door to door. My brother contributed to my campaign and helped me. My other sister has been here on an ongoing basis as well, and I want to thank them for that. But most importantly, as I know that many people in this room today, in this House today, I particularly want to thank my wonderful husband Pat – who is in the galleries today, by the way – for his incredible support, guidance and advice.

Mr. Speaker, there is much to be done. As I stand in this historic House, surrounded by Members here, I recognize that we have entrusted by the people of this province to work to improve their lives. I started today by reminding all hon. Members that our responsibility is to the individuals who make up the mosaic of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let us never forget our duty to them. Let us never forget our fiscal responsibility to them. Let us never forget we are here because of them. I look forward to working with all Members of this

great House of Assembly on behalf of the people of this province.

Thank you for the opportunity to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Contra-minded?

Order, please!

Given that tomorrow is Private Members' Day, the House will resume at 2 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2 p.m.