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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

As I've indicated to this hon. House, a few weeks ago I told you our ratings are up, and as evidenced by our full gallery of visitors.

I'm very pleased today to welcome to the public gallery students from grades 10 to 12 from MSB Regional Academy in Middle Arm. They are accompanied by their teachers, Stephen Boone and Chantelle Bowers and bus driver, Charlie Bursey.

A great welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome a very special group as well to my left, also in the public gallery, from Mary Queen of Peace School in St. John's. They're here with their Principal, Kimberly Leonard.

Both groups will be mentioned in Members' statements this afternoon.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome Ms. Heidi Applin, who's a fourth year archeology student at Memorial University, who's from Happy Valley-Goose Bay down here escaping winter.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, for Members' statements we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Placentia West - Bellevue, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, and Baie Verte - Green Bay.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand to recognize a group of volunteers in my district who have excelled as champions for addressing the issue of mental health and addictions. I speak of Heal Bell Island, which is comprised of concerned citizens who have as their major objective, better awareness of mental health and addictions issues on the Island, but also to help foster the development of services that address the issues and give those dealing with mental health and addictions an avenue to get control of their lives and become more productive in our society.

I had the pleasure to attend the first annual Mental Health and Addictions fair hosted by the organization and held at St. Michael's High School this past weekend. Some 25 presenters from all sectors of our society set up booths to outline the services and supports they offer to assist those facing challenges.

Information was distributed by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Al-Anon, Eastern Health, Planned Parenthood, Choices for Youth, Thrive St. John's, Spirit Horse stables, Turnings, RCMP, Unity in our Community, Let's Talk Cannabis, private businesses and many other organizations. This was a great example of how a volunteer community group can coordinate and facilitate connections between those who need services and those who can provide those services.

While many worked to make this information fair a reality, I have to single out lead coordinating volunteer Susan Boone who did a remarkable job to make this a reality.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Susan and all those who made the first annual Mental Health and Addictions fair a great success. Good luck in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, the gift of music is a treasure to behold and does wonders for the soul. Nowhere would you hear better the voices and instruments of talented musical performers than at St. Gabriel's Hall in Marystown last week at the eighth annual South Coast Music Festival.

Hundreds of entries, dozens of categories ranging from classical piano to musical theatre, renditions of scores of the Broadway musical *Come From Away* to the traditional favourites such as "Saltwater Joys." As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, our cultural and musical heritage is distinct, which is why events such as this are so important, particularly for young people.

I commend all participants, volunteers, organizers, spectators and well-wishers but, particularly, wish to congratulate and thank Patsy Green, the local music teacher whose vision and perseverance led to the creation of this musical institution on the Burin Peninsula.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me in thanking Ms. Green for her contributions and congratulating all those involved in creating, sharing and cultivating this gift of music through the South Coast Music Festival. It is truly a gift to behold.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to Mr. Reginald Farrell, our newest inductee into the St. Alban's Community Park Pathway of Heroes. Born and living in St. Alban's since 1923, he is a pillar of the community and very dear to all his family, friends and neighbours.

Reg's long career with the town council has made him an integral part of our community's history, fixing the town roads, hooking up water and sewer and garbage collection. He also operated Farrell's Sawmill and was very well

known all along our South Coast for his travels on *The Maude Foote*, his schooner named after his mother, delivering products such as lumber and fish casks during World War II.

Residents have tremendous respect and admiration for this strength and vitality, and are proud to recognize his distinct contributions to the town's growth and the great quality of life we all enjoy. His labours and volunteerism are at the core of our strong roots, and we celebrate his distinct honour of being the town's very first fire chief who took possession of our very first fire truck, and he was also our very first ambulance driver.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in recognizing Mr. Reginald Farrell, our hero and friend, for his commitment to our people and community life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

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

I rise in this hon. House to bring attention to a wonderful partnership between Young Adult Cancer Canada, which was founded by Mr. Geoff Eaton, and Mary Queen of Peace Elementary school.

For the past five years, YACC has brought Shave for the Brave to the students of MQP. Shave for the Brave has been Young Adult Cancer Canada's longest annual fundraiser and, for the past 13 years, this fundraiser have provided funds to support digital, local and national programs to help young adults live with, through and beyond cancer.

The funds raised go towards supporting great programs like the Survivor Conference, Retreat Yourself and Localife. These programs give young adults the tools, resources and life-long connections to help them overcome cancer-related challenges they may face such as chronic fatigue, fertility issues, returning to school or work and facing the end of their lives when they are just getting started.

For every cancer at every stage, YACC has the backs of these young adults, but only because those who support Shave for the Brave have theirs.

Since getting involved, MQP raised over \$97,000 and shaved 254 heads – some of the heads are up here. This year alone, they raised over \$22,000 and shaved 48 heads.

Congratulations to the students and Geoff Eaton for their dedication to raise awareness around Young Adult Cancer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge a successful fire, food and music festival that takes place on the Baie Verte Peninsula. The Gathering, hosted by well-known comedian Shaun Majumder takes place this year August 23-25 in Burlington.

The Gathering is part of a larger, not-for-profit social enterprise known as 'ome. The purpose is to rewrite the rural story by creating a sustainable micro economy through tourism by building small businesses and reinvesting in the communities of Burlington, Middle Arm and Smith's Harbour.

The annual festival includes comedy shows, chef hikes, shed crawls and traditional Jiggs' dinner. The first phase for accommodations started out with prospector tents, and now 'ome sweet 'ome is one of the most unique accommodations on the Island of Newfoundland. Logs for the tent frames are locally cut and processed at a family-owned, decades-old sawmill in Middle Arm. Local carpenters construct the tent frames using traditional hand tools and one can choose a single or double occupancy.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that the students of MSB Regional Academy, who are visiting the House of Assembly today, join me in welcoming all my colleagues here at The Gathering 2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to highlight the field work being undertaken by the Geological Survey this summer.

In total, researchers will conduct nine field projects; two in Labrador and seven on the Island portion of the province. Field programs will focus on bedrock and surficial geology mapping, and mineral deposit studies of base and precious and industrial minerals.

Budget 2018 invests \$4.5 million in the Geological Survey which regularly releases research on the geology and mineral resources of the province used by prospectors, junior mining companies and investors for exploration activity.

The province's Geological Survey is the foundation for mineral exploration and mining development in Newfoundland and Labrador and helps strengthen the province's economic foundation as committed to in *The Way Forward*.

Information from the Geological Survey tends to provide a catalyst for claim staking with 40,000 claims staked in 2016 and 2017. This is approximately the total number for the previous four-year period combined. Staked claims generally coincide geographically with public data released by the Geological Survey.

Mr. Speaker, field work, and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of results that occurs over the fall and winter, leads to the development of new publication which contributes to the geoscience knowledgebase. Geological data encourages investment by reducing the risk for private sector initiatives. Mineral exploration, with the potential for discovery and mine development, is a significant economic driver, especially in rural parts of the province.

We wish our researchers from the Geological Survey much success in their field work this summer and look forward to seeing the results of their efforts and the continuing development of the mining industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. We, too, are pleased to recognize the start of Geological Survey summer research program again this year. We all acknowledge the tremendous opportunity that exists in the province with regard to our natural resources.

The mining industry plays a leading role, contributing significantly to our province's economy. Certainly, the information and scientific data gathered through these surveys are invaluable. This field work and analysis has the potential to lead to significant finds.

Discoveries across Newfoundland and Labrador have significantly transformed parts of our province, bringing prosperity and employment, in many cases, to rural areas. Government must remain committed to supporting such valuable research and exploration.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to wish all those participating in the research program a safe and successful summer in the field.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister. We also wish the workers on the Geological Survey every success because their success benefits us all.

Providing reliable geological data to the mining industries is one of the most important industry subsidies this province provides. The data gathered saves companies thousands and possibly millions in field work and analysis, and opens possibilities.

Publicly funded data allows government to better manage our resources and then allows mining companies to better identify and then exploit our mineral resources, which generates employment in rural areas and royalties back to the province.

I wish them a good summer.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: May 7 to 13 was Mental Health Week. This year's theme was #GetLoud about what mental health really is. We joined schools, businesses, community groups, organizations, municipal governments and people in communities throughout our province to get loud.

Mr. Speaker, to start the week, Newfoundland and Labrador became the first province in Canada to launch the MindWell-U 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge province wide. The challenge is an online program specializing in mindfulness training available in English and French at bridgethegapp.ca.

This training, which has been offered successfully through Memorial University's Student Wellness and Counselling Centre since 2016, is an evidence-based program clinically proven to benefit mental and physical health. Mindfulness training has been shown to maintain wellness, reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression and chronic pain, and assists in the treatment of problematic substance use.

This is the latest service added to the province's suite of online mental health and addictions

supports which includes Strongest Families, Bridge the gApp, BreathingRoom and Therapy Assistance Online.

Mr. Speaker, our government's vision for improved mental health care means enhancing care across every level of need. Tools like this training are helping to provide early interventions, which can help prevent mental health problems, mental illness and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, I am in my second week of the challenge and can testify the training is both therapeutic and engaging. I encourage each one of my colleagues in this hon. House and certainly all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to join the 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge through bridgethegapp.ca

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I also recognize May 7-13 was Mental Health Week. During that week, Members of this House participated in and supported a variety of events right across this province. I, myself, had the pleasure and honour of participating in a mental health and addictions forum on Bell Island, and I was happy to be joined by my colleague and friend, the Member for St. John's Centre.

I also attended a touching event in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's where community members, municipal leaders and local groups came together to light it up green in memory of those who had lost their struggle or those living with mental illness. Hats off to the organizers for a beautiful job.

Mr. Speaker, coping mechanisms and supports are vital. The MindWell-U 30 is yet another tool available to help support mental wellness. Congratulations to all those involved in the launch.

Like the minister stated, I suggest all Members of this hon. House join the 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge. We all have role to play in promoting and cultivating mental health. Let's all get loud about mental health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister. I am happy to hear that the province is supporting the MindWell-U 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge. It is indeed important to offer opportunities for people to do mindfulness training as a benefit to mental health and wellness.

Apps and online resources, however, do not replace the urgent need for mental health and addictions services in our province. We hear from people all the time who have still been on wait-lists for up to 15 months for mental health services. Although we have seen improvements, there is still more to do.

Congratulations to all mental health and addictions advocates province-wide for a job well done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier, in 2015, stood in front of workers in Labrador and said that the position of Premier could work out issues causing the IOC strike.

Premier, have you been successful in getting people back to work? Have you lived up to your word?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, back in 2015 it was about grievances that we stood up in face of the workers there, Mr. Speaker, and I have no question and no problem in addressing this issue today. As a matter of fact, it was just yesterday that I met with officials from the union with IOC in Labrador, as well as working very closely with their Member for Labrador West.

Tomorrow we'll be bringing to this floor of the House of Assembly a private Member's resolution. I am hoping that all Members of this House will accept and support the PMR that will be brought onto the floor here tomorrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: The Premier also said it was wrong and disrespectful that 150 jobs were being replaced.

Premier, you've been in office for three years, you've already admitted that the Premier is able to fix this issue: Why are you leaving people in Labrador West without jobs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As everyone in this House would know, the collective bargaining process is something that is actually even part of their charter that we have in our country, Mr. Speaker. So we really encourage people, we've done so with mediation and so on, to stay at the collective bargaining process. Yes, in times when it takes a Premier and others to step up, just like our Member for Labrador West has been doing, the union acknowledged that yesterday in that response.

Mr. Speaker, we'll be bringing a PMR to the floor of this House of Assembly, something that

you as leader of the Opposition did not do when you were in the government side.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, PMRs don't solve all the problems here. The Speaker knows that the Premier has the ability to solve these issues. The exact words in 2015 were: The Premier is the one person who can get the company at the table, meet with the union, get this resolved once and for all.

Premier: Why are you not at the table? Why have you failed to get this resolved?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the parliamentary secretary for the Department of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The situation that's going on in Labrador West today is very stressful, and if the Member wants to refer to the session in 2015, it was not about this. The problems that were talked about in 2015 with 150 jobs have been resolved. They were put back to work, Mr. Speaker.

What we're into today – today marks the beginning of the eighth week of the labour dispute. I have been working with both the union president and the IOC president since day one. The way to solve this, Mr. Speaker, is to get people back to the table, back talking, and that's exactly what myself and the Premier is working on today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do agree with the Member for Labrador West, that we need to get people back at the table. Nothing is being resolved right now.

I ask the Premier: You have the ability to get the union and the company to sit at the table and resolve this issue, will you take the leadership role and do that?

MR. SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary for the ministry of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me remind the Member again, we have been working since day one to get these two groups back to the table. Let me also remind the Member, it's not the Premier or me who get those people back to the table. It's the two parties that must agree to go back to the table, and that's what we're working on.

We're encouraging them; I'm talking to the president of IOC on a daily basis, as well as the president of the union. They're getting close to getting back to the table, I will say, but it's their issues that have to be resolved, and to get them resolved we need to get the two parties back to the table and talking. That's their prerogative and that's what they're being encouraged to do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do respect the hon. Member's commitment to try and resolve this, but the reality is here – and I have to quote again: The Premier is the one person who can get the companies at the table, meet with the unions, get this resolved once and for all.

Will the Premier take the lead?

You said it in 2015. In 2018, please take the lead and resolve this.

MR. SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary for Natural Resources.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say it again, Mr. Speaker, and the Premier referred to it, we met with the union president last night and some of the officials from the union executive. They know where we stand. We know where they stand. We have a good understanding of what the issues are, but as the union president agreed with us last night, and he recognized the fact that we are working to get both sides back to the table. He will tell you that.

The fact of the matter is – and he recognizes that – that in order for this to get resolved we need both parties sitting at the table, talking about the issues and meeting a resolution that's acceptable to both sides.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The CEO and co-founder of Sequence Bio is accusing the Health Research Ethics Authority of acting unlawfully and unethically when it comes to research applications.

Will the minister immediately get engaged and launch an investigation into these serious accusations?

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

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

As I said to the media yesterday, we received a package of allegations, if you like, complaints, around the process of the Health Research Ethics Board. My responsibility is to look into that and see if there's any substance to those complaints.

If the process is working, then I have no role to play. If the process is not working, Mr. Speaker,

I will be delighted to look into what options exist to make that better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, it's evident it's not working.

I say to the minister, your department has a representative on the Health Research Ethics Authority and, like it or not, you are indeed the minister who is ultimately responsible for it.

How long will you stand idly by while the authority runs important research and millions of potential funding dollars out of this province?

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

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

I would like to point out I'm supporting, in my own way, an arm's-length body which was set up by the previous government to deal with a problem they had to deal with back prior to 2011. I am supporting the process they put in place. If there is a problem with that process, I would like to find out what that is and see what remedies are available.

At the end of the day, my staff and I will make that determination. We received that package as of yesterday and are currently looking into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, this is bigger than just one company. These alleged issues of the authority are denying patients access to leading clinical trials and treatment for their particular illnesses.

Will the minister take action on behalf of the countless Newfoundlanders and Labradorians

who could benefit from these groundbreaking treatments?

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

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

I think I'd like to correct some factual inaccuracies in that statement and firstly open by saying that my aim as minister is to protect the interests and enhance the well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The issues around clinical trials, those particularly pertaining to childhood cancers, those are resolved. Those are approved. Children in this province will have access to the latest and greatest groundbreaking research.

This is about a genetics project on human DNA and I have committed to look at seeing whether the process is flawed. If it isn't, I will stand back. If it is, we will look at our options, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, we know we're six months-plus into this review process that normally takes 30 days in any other jurisdiction which has an impact on the quality of health care that people should have access to, particularly when it comes to around particular research. From what I understand, this is not an isolated case.

Has the minister heard of any additional complaints regarding the Health Research Ethics Authority?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Again, just to put this in context, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman opposite is right in that it isn't an isolated complaint. It's endemic to every Health Research Ethics Authority across the country. There are always tensions between researchers who want to move

ahead and regulators who are charged with safeguarding the public interests.

As I have said, if there is a problem with this process, we will examine that and determine whether or not that is the case. If there is, we will act to see what our options are. If there is no problem – to be honest, the gentleman opposite misleads when he talks about the timelines.

The process was that they have to be assessed within 30 days, commenced within 30 days, not decided on within 30 days, Mr. Speaker. There's a degree of liberalness with that statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: As I had mentioned, in other jurisdictions it can be completed within 30 days, but here, for some reason, it gets dragged out. There were over 100 respondents to a survey recently conducted by the Health Research Ethics Authority.

Can the minister share any of the data collected from that survey? Were there any complaints similar to those from Sequence Bio?

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

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

My understanding is the Health Research Ethics Authority has taken these comments seriously and has instituted a review. I assume the survey to which the Member opposite alludes is something that they have done.

Again, being an arm's-length body and established that way by the government in the day, the gentleman opposite – being an arm's length body, I don't have any insights into that. I can make inquiries of the HREA, but currently I have no knowledge of the nature of that survey.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: While you may not have any knowledge of the survey, you did receive a letter from a former employee more than two months ago outlining some of the major concerns with the ethics board itself.

Yesterday we learned that the government cancelled a contract with Burry's Shipyard. The local MHA says the department had options to work with the shipyard to resolve this issue and have the work completed in Clarenville; however, the minister says they had no choice but to move the work to the St. John's Dockyard.

Why the difference in opinion?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, I work with all the MHAs in our caucus and in this House when it comes to issues in their districts.

Mr. Speaker, we found ourselves in a timeline issue here with the dockyard. On advice from senior staff – and independent advice I may add – we had to make the decision that we made to remove the vessel at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to us to make sure that all of our vessels are available for our provincial service. The timelines here put us in a situation where we had no choice at this time but to move the vessel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The local MHA said the marine railway could have been back in service in a week or two and the yard was prepared to complete the refit over a period of nine to 12 weeks.

Does the minister disagree with this assertion?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, on advice of senior officials in the department and some independent advice, we found that right now the timelines as they were presented to us didn't fit our scheduling for what we need to do for our ferry system throughout this entire province.

It's kind of rich, Mr. Speaker, to see the Members opposite defend shipbuilding in this province when they were the ones that took jobs that could have been in Marystown and shipped them to Romania. Mr. Speaker, it's kind of rich.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: I wish the minister would stick to the reality of – we have a shipyard that's in trouble now and a region that may be economically impacted. We also have the South Coast that will not have a reliable ferry service for a period of time.

After hearing that government cancelled the contract, the local MHA suggested that this could result in closure for them. The closure of this shipyard would be a huge blow to Clarenville and the entire region, along with approximately 150 employees.

Is the minister concerned that this action and lack of willingness to resolve this issue may lead to local businesses closing its doors and 150 people being put out of work?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

The rich questions continue, because he wasn't so concerned when he took jobs that could have been in Marystown and put them in Romania.

Mr. Speaker, we always take jobs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as very important to us. The reality is here we need all of our boats into our system. The challenge that we face here is one of a timeline. Senior officials came to the department and said, look, we can't meet these timelines. We went out; I asked for an independent assessment of this, Mr. Speaker. We received that independent opinion and we were left with the decision that we made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: So it is offside with the MHA who's trying to promote their district, fair enough.

I do have to clarify something, too. Nobody more than me would have loved for Kiewit to have bid on the ferries in Newfoundland and Labrador. They didn't bid. You can't award a contract to a company that doesn't bid to actually provide that service.

Can the minister explain why it took three months to make a decision without consultation on this shipyard in Clarenville?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, again, the information opposite is so, so incorrect. It's not even – hardly worth entertaining.

Mr. Speaker, we actually went to the shipyard on three occasions and asked for timelines. On occasion number one we went back. On occasion number two, when the timeline came in I asked for an independent assessment, which we received. That independent assessment informed us and we went back to the shipyard and asked for a third timeline. The same thing again, Mr. Speaker, my senior officials told me the timelines weren't doable. So again I asked for an independent assessment of that timeline, which we received and which informed our decision.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind all Members I will not tolerate interruption of the identified MHA.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, foremost, I would like to thank the minister and the Premier for taking heed to my questions and announcing both the PAAP and the CAP programs two weeks ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LESTER: But, can the minister explain the reason for delaying the announcement of both programs and holding back implementation from farmers and industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, a \$37 million federal-provincial agricultural agreement is now in force, in action, and applications are available to farmers, both existing and incumbent farmers but new farmers. We have provincial government programs that are available. The applications are available.

As well, the benefits of those programs will be out in the field quickly. I am confident that part of the rigor and the enthusiasm to the Member's question is that he knows of farmers that would be very, very anxious to get access to those programs, and I think they may be very close to him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: I'd just like to remind the minister that photo ops, nor media releases will do anything to increase this province's food sustainability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LESTER: This year's announcements were actually – PAAP was two months later than normal and the CAP program, which was similar to the Growing Forward program, is already a month into its inception. This wasn't sprung upon us. We knew this two years ago.

I ask the minister: Can the minister assure that there will be a continued rate of acceptance and approval over the summer despite staffing challenges, which include summer holidays?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BRYNE: Mr. Speaker, if you were to use the past as the benchmark for normal, what you'd have to acknowledge is that what is normal for this Member is a reduction in the number of farms in Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador in the previous 15 years by 25 per cent. That's their normal.

Our new normal is that we want to expand that agricultural production by doubling it. We want to expand agricultural jobs by doubling them, but we also want to establish the basis for those farms to grow. That is why we have identified 62,000 hectares of agricultural land of interest, Mr. Speaker.

We are growing agriculture; they are growing rhetoric.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: While I can understand that the minister may not quite grasp the tight time frames for farmers and the associated growing season, which we must operate in, I would like to point out that in the past two years we've seen a reduction of almost 12.5 per cent of agricultural producers. That is a trend that we are really concerned with.

Mr. Speaker, how many producers are going to receive product, plants or seed, from the Wooddale nursery this year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: What a fantastic opportunity the hon. Member now has afforded me to highlight that Wooddale – the former forestry centre, the research centre of excellence – now will continue on with forestry activity, as so important to our province, but now has a new mandate, a new strengthened mandate for research and innovation on agriculture.

Now, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, that didn't exist before under that administration. They didn't have a centre of excellence in Central Newfoundland to support our agricultural industry. By the will, by the strength and the power and the support of this government, we now have the Wooddale centre of innovation for forestry and agriculture that didn't exist before and will produce results like you've never seen them before.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: I would like to suggest to the minister that one of the commodities we may look at growing would be popcorn. That way, we could all have it here in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LESTER: Was there industry consultation as it pertains to production levels, varieties and crops? If so, can you table the results of this consultation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, do you know what? There was lots of consultation about growing agriculture. I think one of the consultation sessions happened in September 2017. I think the hon. Member might know when those consultations in Mount Pearl occurred. Another consultation occurred post that.

We engaged not only the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, but the president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture was the co-chair of

our sector council that prepared the agricultural work plan.

We had literally dozens and dozens and dozens of plans of key priorities and objectives that we are meeting. One of those was the Wooddale centre for forestry and agriculture innovation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Again, I appreciate that detail, but I still don't see the answer to my question.

Can you table the work plan and the consultations that were done with industry in regard to the activities at Wooddale?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, we have done extensive work on the consultations but, as well, we unveiled this at Wooddale. The agricultural sector plan was produced and made available to the entire industry with literally dozens of participants in our agricultural industry. I think the hon. Member might have been invited or might have been there, I'm not sure.

The contribution that he could have made would have been there, if it was made, but what we can inform the House is that there is a significant plan where we're now growing seedlings for sale to farmers, using the greenhouse infrastructure of Wooddale, so that farmers in Newfoundland and Labrador, who are the experts in root crops, can avail of those seedlings to be able to produce crops in their own ground.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: I would like to ask the minister: Does he actually know if those crops are applicable to grow in Newfoundland? I still

haven't heard if you're willing to table those consultations.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. Member and I can get a team of researchers together. We can investigate whether or not carrots, potatoes, onions and cabbage are applicable for the climate of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that those vegetables, those root crops, those seedlings that we have in Wooddale, that are currently already on order from farmers in Newfoundland and Labrador will be very, very applicable to the climate and growing conditions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: I still didn't get an answer to my question whether he will table them or not.

Moving on, what is the government's plan to deal with the possible reoccurrence of the spruce budworm in this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: That's a nice switch, Mr. Speaker, because it affords me the opportunity to provide information to this House of the incredible efforts that our government is making to prepare for spruce budworm. Did you know in this past federal budget the federal Finance minister, on behalf of the minister of Natural Resources, put in place a federal program to be able to assist provinces on this occurrence?

Spruce budworm regrettably is a natural cycle. It is moving east. There are occurrences now in Quebec, in New Brunswick and in Nova Scotia. We have to take precautions; we have to be prepared for this. It has not infested Newfoundland or Labrador at this point in time, which is an important part of the province that

the Member failed to mention in his last question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: But we are on the ready, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: As the minister confirmed, outbreaks of the budworm tend to be cyclical every 30 to 40 years, which means we're likely due for an outbreak. He mentioned funds available in the federal budget.

Are any of those funds earmarked for prevention in Newfoundland or control?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, that's why we engage our federal government, the federal government that has provided these funds. These, of course, were just earmarked or noted in the recent federal budget. What I can report to the Member and to this House is that unlike the previous administration, which acted in a philosophy or a policy of splendid isolationism, our government is engaging the federal government to ensure that those funds, those programs are made available to the forest industry of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North for a very quick question, please.

MR. LESTER: The minister has spoken of speaking with the federal government. Does that include speaking to Parks Canada?

Back 30 years ago, there was a big issue with the outbreak within Terra Nova Park.

Will the control include chemical sprays, biologicals, and has there been any consultations done with communities that may be affected?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, a quick response, please.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question.

The hon. Member points out, will the federal government be acting on its own federal lands in parks lands, in particular, for a problem that has not yet occurred. I appreciate the fact that he is a solution in search of the problem.

We are acting on the circumstances as they evolve. We'll apply the best prescription, the best remedy to the situation that exists as it exists. We plan for all inevitabilities, but we will work for a solution to a known problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government's April 1 minimum wage increase of 15 cents – that's right, 15 cents an hour – does nothing to lift full-time minimum wage earners above the poverty line. Research has shown a higher minimum wage does not mean job losses and it does mean more money going into the local economy. British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario have all committed to a minimum wage of \$15. Economists are clearly showing that an increase in minimum wage is good for the economy.

I ask the Premier: Will he bring in legislation lifting the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, this past year we engaged in consultation across the entire province about the minimum wage and indexing the minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index or some indicator of economic activity within the province. That consultation was attended,

was participated in by literally dozens and dozens of individuals.

I held a consultation in a former role that I had here in St. John's. I did not see the hon. Member there at that particular point in time, but I'm sure her thoughts and opinions were brought forward through that consultation.

What we know and what we can be assured of, in Newfoundland and Labrador we will have a growing minimum wage that will be indexed to an economic indicator and that people of Newfoundland and Labrador, including our minimum wage earners, will see increased minimum wage (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, indexing an already too low minimum wage to CPI, we will never, never catch up to the poverty rates.

Mr. Speaker, clearly government doesn't listen to the people of the province, invoking a 15 cent increase in minimum wage when most called for \$15. There are 13,000 minimum wage earners in this province, two-thirds of whom are women working full-time and half of these older than 25 years of age.

I ask the Premier: How can he justify not helping the lowest paid people in the province when it makes good economic sense?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, this government has enacted minimum wage legislation standards which will reflect an increase in that minimum wage standard over the course of time. We have also, as a government, and the Finance Minister – our Finance Minister can speak even stronger and better to this. But we've provided additional supports to low-income families, to those that are requiring assistance through our child benefits.

MS. DEMPSTER: \$280 million.

MR. BYRNE: We are adding \$280 million.

MS. DEMPSTER: Under the Poverty Reduction Initiative.

MR. BYRNE: I should let – do you know what? The next question, I should just simply let the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development be able to speak because she knows this file better than anyone. We have added additional benefits for families in need, and they're receiving that benefit as we speak, 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.

Over a year ago, in response to our private Member's motion, government voted to start the process to enact pay equity legislation. To date, we have seen nothing from this government other than a refusal to answer directly questions in the House on this matter. This is an issue long overdue for fixing.

I ask the Premier: Why won't he direct the minister responsible to bring pay equity legislation to this House?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

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

This is a very important issue for the women of this province, and we were pleased to support the pay equity private Member's resolution when it came forward. There is an intergovernmental working committee working on this very issue, Mr. Speaker. They've met recently. They will again meet in the month of May, and we're continuing to work on this very serious issue.

Thank you very much, 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.

Women in this province make 69 cents for every dollar a man makes. This is completely unacceptable and must be corrected. It isn't a women's rights issue, it's a human rights issue, and women and others have been waiting too long for this be taken care of.

I ask the Premier: What does he have to say besides we're studying it, to the thousands of working women in this province who have been waiting for a year for him to deal with his commitment to fix this unfair wage gap?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are several departments within government who have come together, who have looked at the issue of equity in the province, not only within government but in general. I can say that as a government we value equity within government.

Many of our key roles, our management positions within government are held by women. In fact, there are more women in executive and management positions in government than there are men.

It is an issue that is important. It's an issue that we are focused on and it's an issue that we're working on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Time for Oral Questions has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice had 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.

I'm once again very happy to stand and support a petition on universal public child care and after school care program. These are the reasons for this petition:

Our licensed child care system is a patchwork of private for-profit centres, non-profit community-based centres and family daycare, plus a small number of education- and workplace-based centres.

It is nowhere near meeting the child care needs in our province. Affordable licensed child care is often in short supply in rural parts of the province. Even in St. John's there are long wait lists for quality child care programs.

Child care programs have both social and financial benefits for society. Investing in child care creates jobs: \$1 million invested in child care would create 40 jobs, more than in any other sector.

A gender-based analysis of the provincial budget would have indicated the need for a public child care program, as a key way to close the wage gap between women and men in this province.

Therefore, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly as follows:

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate steps to put in place a plan for a gradual transition to a universal, regulated and publicly funded and fully accessible child care and after school care program.

Mr. Speaker, other provinces have had the situation that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – when it comes to child care and they have taken steps to ensure that they have child care programs.

One province that's probably a good parallel for us is Prince Edward Island; smaller than us, smaller population, smaller budget, not the resources that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They, too, had a similar patchwork quilt of child care in that province. They decided they needed a complete child care program, funded and regulated by government. They started a transition into the program that they now have. Those who were for-profit daycare centres, for example, actually opted to join the government's program.

We have a model to follow. I urge this government to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 60 is the main highway that runs through the Town of Conception Bay South and is a vital artery to the provincial road network; and

WHEREAS Route 60 is one of the most heavily travelled roads in the province; and

WHEREAS Route 60 has been deteriorating and requires major upgrades;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to allocate funds to upgrade Route 60.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is a long list of petitions I've presented on this particular issue on Route 60. It's probably one of the more important issues that are brought to me on a daily basis by residents of my district and the town.

As I said, it's the fifth busiest road in the province. The road is in dire need of a lot of repairs. I continue to bring this up and I have dialogue with the minister on this as well. The hope is to get some repairs – instead of patchwork, some more permanent repairs done to this road.

As we speak today this road is still a provincial highway, it is part of the provincial road network and until something changes, it's the responsibility of the province to make this road be maintained and have it in a condition where people can safely drive over it, not run the risk of blowouts, tires, rims, you name it. The road is very challenging. There's a lot of patchwork done in the last several months, hot patch as opposed to cold patch. There are improvements. The bottom line is the road does need more permanent repairs.

It's an issue that I'll continue to lobby on. It's an issue that I still have more petitions to present actually. There's one thing I promised, I speak to people and I assure them that I will continue to fight the fight. It's what I'm doing here today. I'll continue at it and hopefully my persistence will pay off down the road, Mr. Speaker, hopefully this coming construction season.

Once again, I do urge government to address Route 60 and get some more permanent repairs done.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS opioid addiction is a very serious problem affecting many individuals and families in our province and the Bell Island area is no exception; and

WHEREAS the effects of these problems have implications that negatively impact many people, old and young; and

WHEREAS supports and treatment programs have been proven to break the cycle of addictions and have helped many into recovery;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to establish a Suboxone-methadone treatment plan for Bell Island, which would include a drug addictions counsellor at the hospital and a drug awareness program in the local schools.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to present this on a number of occasions and we're making slow baby steps towards getting all players to buy into this: Eastern Health, the department, some of the officials and some of the professionals there, as we look at how we best address that.

I had an opportunity this past weekend, and I spoke earlier about it, to attend a mental health and addictions information fair on Bell Island, and got an opportunity to discuss, particularly, with a number of professionals and agencies that provide addiction services, and identified things that I had seen, things I understood and things that were relayed to me by residents. Those who are dealing with addictions issues, people who've tried to support those with addictions and those who now have the fear that their loved ones may be actually on the cusp of becoming addicted to a particular opioid as part of a process.

The common ground from all of the professionals were we have to have services that are readily available in a geographic proximity so that when the supports and when the individuals have the mechanism around them, be it their family supports, be it at that time they want to take stake of their life, they want to get control again, they don't want to be going through the hardships they are and having the impact on their family and loved ones, and not being able to be as productive as they'd like to in society, we need to have them available.

To have people who have to leave early in the morning, get in a line up, be ostracized and stigmatized because people know they're going over for opioid treatment, knowing that they have to access other government funding to do it, go in a specific taxi or route of transportation that stigmatizes who they are. Then be away from any supports and take hours to travel from one area to another area to get some of the basic stuff and then have to come back, relying on a ferry service and not knowing if it's reliable, knowing they have to get back and have the supports that are necessary.

So from an economy of scale, from the moral fibre that we have to be able to do the right thing, we need to have programs and services available.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get a chance to speak to this again and hopefully we'll be able to rectify this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I call Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day, Sir.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, from the Order Paper, I would call Order 4, third reading of Bill 11.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I moved, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 11, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act. (Bill 11)

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 11)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister for Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises, Bill 15, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Service NL shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises, Bill 15, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises," carried. (Bill 15)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises. (Bill 15)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 15 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4. I move pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, May 15.

MR. SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the House extend beyond the 5:30 deadline.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I note your enthusiasm for that motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Looking forward to supper.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 10, second reading of Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Torngat, that Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families, be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 14 entitled An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families." (Bill 14)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister for Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour and a privilege indeed today to speak to Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a long time coming. When I look back over the last six, eight, nine months in my department and I think about the monumental amount of work that staff have put in to this bill and lots of late nights, it is a substantive bill and I'll take the next – I probably won't use the full hour, but I'm going to take some time to run through some of the high points of what I think is a fantastic bill.

Mr. Speaker, this is progressive legislation that we are debating today, one which will have great benefits for children, youth and their families in this province. It is my hope that, as we debate this legislation, all Members will support it and acknowledge that at the heart of this bill it is child and youth centred, with a very real and tangible focus on families.

Unlike its predecessor, it is culturally responsive. As an indigenous woman, I can tell you that I am pretty excited today about some of

the changes that are coming and what this bill is bringing in, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start first with providing a bit of history. This province proclaimed the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* in 2011. This act promoted the safety and well-being of children and youth in need of protection. Mr. Speaker, that act has served us well. What we're doing today is building upon some of the groundwork that was laid in that first act in 2011.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government of the day recognized that child welfare practices and legislation are always evolving. That is why a statutory review process was built into the legislation where we would see a review undertaken every five years. This process started in June 2016 and consultations were carried out over a six-month period.

Mr. Speaker, we had a tremendous response during the consultation process. More than 30 organizations participated, either in-person or virtual dialogue sessions, focus groups, written submissions. We also heard from many indigenous organizations and governments in this province. We received more than 170 surveys from children, youth and families, as well as from our own staff who use this legislation on the ground out in their workplace each and every day.

I told you we'd been at this a long time and a lot of work have gone into it. Our intent, when we started, was to amend the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*; however, as we continued through the process of reviewing all the recommendations from the consultation process, conducting a jurisdictional scan of child and youth protection legislation across the country and reviewing child welfare literature, it quickly became clear to us that significant changes would be required to the act. As a result, Mr. Speaker, it was determined that the best course of action would be to introduce new legislation to incorporate all the changes that were deemed necessary.

This is not to say, as I said in my opening, that the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* is not a good piece of legislation. It is and it has served us well. But to reflect where we need to

be today in child protection, as recommended through the consultation process, we needed to develop new legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the staff in my department, Children, Seniors and Social Development, have worked very hard in developing this legislation in consultation with Legislative Counsel. They have taken all the information and have developed what I believe, what we have before us in this House today, is a new progressive piece of legislation which will serve our province very well. Although it will replace the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*, I would rather, Mr. Speaker, like to think that the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* build upon the principles.

Our focus remains on protecting children and youth and supporting their families. We understand fully the responsibility that lies with our staff when it comes to child protection. Over the course of the last 10 months, as minister in this social department, I have seen how hard our front-line social workers, zone managers and other management work. They are passionate and dedicated to the safety and well-being of children and youth. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, while this department deals with very challenging and difficult situations, there are many rewards.

Mr. Speaker, I've gone out and about to maybe close to a dozen offices, I've been on a couple of First Nation reserves, I have been on the North Coast with my colleague, the Member for Torngat, out around Central, the West Coast. It's when you get out in those offices that you hear a different perspective than you do in here in the boardroom while those senior executive staff does a fantastic job, but there's no substitute for on-the-ground experience.

I have just learned so much. I've seen the passion. They work hard. It's challenging. Mr. Speaker, time won't permit me today to share some of the really powerful, positive stories that happen in this social department, but I will share, quickly, one that speaks to the dedication of some of the social workers we have on our team, and it speaks to the rapport that our social workers build with their clients.

That was of a young man who was on our protection list, working with a social worker. He didn't have a date for his graduation. And what did the social worker do, Mr. Speaker? He invited her as his date to the grad. She obliged, she bought him a corsage and she went. That's the kind of people that we have working out in the field, in the trenches, doing challenging work in our department, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: So many wonderful stories that make it all worthwhile.

Every day we are continuing to build a child protection system that is responsive to the priority needs of our children, youth and families; we are continuing to make significant progress in creating a culture of accountability, excellence and consistency across all programs in all regions. Today, beginning debate on the new *Children, Youth and Families Act*, Mr. Speaker, as I said in my opening, is a monumental step in this process. The new act will be the cornerstone now from which all decisions are made.

The proposed bill will improve information sharing; enhance the focus on maintaining children and youth in their family home; expand permanency options for children and youth in foster care; identify and support youth in need of protection; and strengthen service delivery to indigenous children, youth and their families; and develop a licensing regime for out-of-home placements.

So I'm going to take you through briefly, Mr. Speaker, each of these six points that I mentioned covered here in this new bill today. Information sharing: The new act enhances what information can be shared in order to protect the safety and well-being of children and youth. During our consultations, we received a lot of feedback about existing barriers that prevent effective information sharing between departmental staff and others who are involved in the lives of children and youth.

It is critical that all relevant information is available to protect the safety and well-being of children. It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that we value the relationships we have with the

families that we work with. So we seek consent, whenever possible, before disclosing that information.

New provisions will allow a director or a manager to share information for the purposes of case planning and integrated service delivery and when it is in the best interest of the child as opposed to only when it is necessary to ensure the safety, health or well-being of a child. This will provide clarity on when to disclose information as the act outline the best interest principles.

Essentially, this provision provides clarity that a director or manager can disclose information when it is in the best interest of the child. The current act did not provide an interpretation on necessary which could have limited case planning. For example, Mr. Speaker, a social worker may want to share information about a child that is not necessary to ensure the child's safety but it is in the child's best interest to share the information as it could help us access additional services for that child.

This provision also allows us to formally share information for a criminal court proceeding, an investigation by the chief medical examiner and the child and youth advocate. I want to be clear here, Mr. Speaker, that to date we have been fully co-operative with the advocate whenever the office needed information as it has carried out investigations or reviews. This just enshrines our practice, what we're doing here today, Mr. Speaker, in our legislation.

The advocate, as you would know and Members here in the House would know, is independent of this House and carries out very valuable work, and anytime she brings forward recommendations we embrace those. Anything we can do to improve the lives and the safety of children and youth is something that we take very serious, Mr. Speaker.

As well, the right to information and information sharing section allows for a social worker to obtain relevant information about the parent if it is required to determine if a child is in need of protection or remains in need of protection. This has a direct impact on a child's safety and well-being.

In practice today, social workers are already obtaining information about a parent under the current *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*. The new act once again clarifies and confirms that this information can be obtained under the *Children, Youth and Families Act* if it is required so that we can determine if a child is in need of protection or remains in need of protection.

By clarifying and confirming – sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we have things in an act that are a little open to interpretation. What we've done is try to provide some clarity around that important piece. This provision will better equip staff with the tools they need when working with families and partners to develop the best plan for the protection of children.

Mr. Speaker, the third bullet of the six: Preserving the family unit. We would always want children to remain at home with their families whenever it is safely possible. When a child or youth is in need of protection, social workers work with families so that children and youth can remain living in the home where it is determined safe to do so.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, sometimes we spend a lot of time talking about the number of children and youth that are in care, but most of the children and youth who have interactions with the department remain in their family home. Approximately 80 per cent that we work with remain in their family home. Sometimes we don't talk about the value around that piece and the important work that staff does.

The new *Children, Youth and Families Act* clearly highlights the value of family, as evidenced by the addition of the word “families” in the title. My department not only works with children and youth, we also work with families. We place tremendous value, Mr. Speaker, on keeping families together. This act enshrines this and puts an emphasis, I believe, clearly on the direction of where we want to go in the future.

Promoting the safety and well-being of children and youth means ensuring there are the appropriate supports in place to preserve families. Yes, the children and youth in these families need protective intervention but, Mr. Speaker, we all need to challenge ourselves to

provide better services to the family unit as a whole, to reduce risk and to make home a safer place for the child.

These are some of the conversations that happen in my boardroom every single day. We have many, many staff and social workers working hard every day to ensure that children and youth in need of protection are kept safe, but to never be comfortable, Mr. Speaker, with the status quo.

Often I've said in here – and the Minister of Health sometimes says I fashionably use quotes. Another one I like is that the biggest room in any house is the room for improvement. I like that. Every day, all of us, because of the important work we do, need to challenge ourselves to provide better services. The answer is not always placing a child or youth into foster care or some other alternate living arrangement.

As I noted, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of moments ago, 80 per cent of children and youth who have interaction with our department remain in their family home. Many of these families need support and services. By providing services like counselling, behaviour management, parenting programs, we can provide the supports needed to help children, youth and their families.

In 2017, my department first started providing Triple P, Positive Parenting Program. Mr. Speaker, this is a program that is considered one of the most effective parent programs worldwide. Triple P is an evidence-based education and support program for parents that have been – the program has been extensively evaluated. It has demonstrated effectiveness for families with complex needs and those who are at risk of child maltreatment.

It is available in most Canadian jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. We've had 200-plus peer reviewed research articles on this Triple P parenting program. Everything that I have learned since I've been at the department is that we are getting very, very positive feedback.

I think this Triple P parenting program is a good example of government using evidence based and then implementing something that there's been research done and we've seen the results

and now we are using it, rolling it out here at home in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Although we've only had this program in place for about a year, the feedback from parents and social workers has been overwhelmingly positive. We are finding that by providing these supports to reduce risk, we are enhancing safety of children and maintaining children in the family home wherever that is possible.

A lot of families need support from time to time and by placing a greater focus on providing the resources necessary, we can help those families so that in many cases they are no longer on the child protection system. That's a success story, Mr. Speaker. That is a success story for everyone involved, but especially the children.

Sometimes for various reasons, parents struggle, not that maybe they love their child or children any less, but they struggle and they need that little bit of extra support with parenting. So that's what Triple P parenting is helping us do, Mr. Speaker.

My department is also exploring services for vulnerable families not in need of protection. I want to be clear here. Currently, our child protection program focuses on tertiary services. That is helping the children, youth and families that are in need of a protective intervention; however, as we carried out our consultations into the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*, secondary prevention services came up time and time again as a way to help vulnerable families before there was an issue with child and youth maltreatment.

Another quote for you, Mr. Speaker, but I think about them all the time. They come to me as I'm reading my notes. As my grandmother would say: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So if you can get in there and you can help that vulnerable family, look at what you're going to save, not in terms of monetary but what you're going to save for that child, prevent that child from being taken from the home, which is always a last resort, and prevent those parents from having to go through that terrible experience.

There are opportunities to provide services to vulnerable families before they ever enter into a

Protective Intervention Program, thereby reducing even further the number of children that are in our care.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, in *Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System*, one of the major areas for improvement is around early intervention, including parenting skills and child development. There is a working group my department sits on, which is addressing supports for new and young families. There are also a tremendous number of parenting and program services available across the province, like healthy baby clubs, educational and support programs and Family Resource Centres, which do amazing fantastic work.

There's a Family Resource Centre in my community where I grew up. We have a road connection now, but in complete isolation in a very small community dotted along the Southeast Coast of Labrador. We didn't have a lot, but I'll tell you that the family resource program, I took both my children to that program and it provides a service for birth to 12 and it was absolutely fantastic.

Sometimes young individuals may have children and they may not have really received the parenting skills themselves. There is no manual that really comes with being a parent. Sometimes we learn as we go. So you just need that little bit of extra support and guidance, and that's what some of these programs are doing. We want to build on that. We want to have more programs so we can get in there early. We can prevent children from coming into care and the ones that do, we can start working with them as early as possible to reunite them back at home.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that although the act acknowledges the role that families have in the care and upbringing of children and youth, our acts did vastly remain child and youth centred. If we are in situations where there is a conflict between the safety, health and well-being of a child or youth and the family unit, then the child or youth's safety, health and well-being will always prevail. That is and always will be our primary focus.

The fourth bullet, Mr. Speaker, is around permanency planning, where we plan on going

with permanency planning. Child protection is a critical and challenging area of service delivery. Every day, child protection social workers in our province work to assess the safety of children and make decisions, sometimes difficult decisions, Mr. Speaker, often difficult decisions, to ensure their protection. Most times it is safe to provide important services for children while they remain at home but there are other times when, for the safety of the child, that is not possible.

This legislation expands and supports permanency efforts where the child or youth lives with a relative or another person significant to them as opposed to remaining in foster care. This means they have a chance to grow up with a continued connection to their family. It is very, very important stuff we're talking about here today, Mr. Speaker, about our children and youth.

All of us I think will agree our children are our most prized possession in life. So we have a responsibility for those that are vulnerable, as a government and as a department, to ensure those that are in care or are on a protective intervention list are getting the best service and that we can do everything we can to set them on the right course for later in life when they become young adults and branch out on their own. This will also allow for those relatives or others close to the child or youth to obtain permanent custody of the child or youth much more quickly than before.

Essentially, as an example, if the permanency plan for a child or youth is to remain with a grandparent, the court may decide, based on a social worker's recommendation, to transfer permanent custody to the grandparent without having to wait for all the temporary custody orders to expire. I think sometimes, Mr. Speaker, the way it was before this was taking maybe up to two years. You had to have two temporary court orders, another custody order. Now, after six months, a social worker may be able to recommend to a judge.

I'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention here – and some of my colleagues, especially those in Labrador will get this – we have large, large families, so it was not uncommon for a child to grow up with grandma or with auntie.

Actually, myself, my own story, my grandmother had seven boys and two girls and pretty much everyone else who went through. Doctors and dentists, they all came to the house as well. Then I became the 10th child. At four years old, I went to live with my grandparents in a home of 12. They were both seniors when they actually took me in. I think I turned out okay, Mr. Speaker. I had a wonderful upbringing by my grandmother. The values they instilled in me were tremendous.

Many times we have children that grandma is caring for. She may not want to go through all of the court process of adopting for various reasons, but she would be willing to accept taking custody of the child and raising them. So that's what we're talking about here today, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes I just share things to put it into a little bit of context.

This is also a really positive option in situations where either a child or youth or the family or kin caring for them do not want to pursue adoption. Mr. Speaker, some families prefer to have legal custody. This is another option to achieve permanency for the child or youth. I believe the Member for Torngat will attest we often see this as an option that indigenous families would prefer in those large families. Rather than have a child leave the community, the child, if they can't remain safely at home with mom and dad, will go to live with a kin.

Mr. Speaker, I did mention that some of our children and youth in care have adoption as their identified permanency plan. What that means is some of the children that come into our care, they're never going home. Once they're assessed we know. It's sad, it's heavy but it is reality in the world that we live in. For those children that we know won't be going home to their families anymore, we have to put a permanency plan in place.

Although the adoption process has not changed with this new act, I am very pleased to share with this House that in *Budget 2018* we have committed \$395,000 over the next two years to expedite children through the adoption process, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: We have many children – too many children that we know won't be going home. Social workers, there are so many different competing priorities, demands on their time; they just sometimes don't get to do those profiles and go through the adoption process. So we will be focusing some extra resources there and it is our hope and intent that more children will be adopted and will be placed into loving homes.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about earlier, when I got up, about some of the challenges in this department but also that there are rewards and success stories. Since we're talking about adoptions, I also would be remiss if I didn't share a story that happened, early days, when I was in the department. We had these two siblings – 16 and 17 I believe – and they had been in our care for a long, long time. Then one morning, when we were about to start a meeting, one of my staff said: Guess what? A family came forward and chose to adopt those two. Not easy to take on two teenagers that hadn't had a home.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that was a good day in our department, and we certainly celebrated. I think about that young person, the elder that was just about to age out of the system and what it must feel like to age out and not have a home connection. Things that so many of our own children take for granted.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, I think that we are too good to them, if there is such a thing as being too good to your children. Times have changed. Back in my day when you grew up, you had your little chores and things to do and now we do a lot of our children, but not every child has that. Not every child has the loving home. So we applaud those people and I think there's a special place for them that reach out and open their homes and their hearts and adopt. I certainly appreciate them, as I know many of our staff and all of us here in the House do.

We want to ensure we match children who are eligible for adoption with loving and supportive families. By adding those dedicated resources, the \$395,000 over two years, we will hopefully allow more children eligible for adoption to be adopted much more quickly. Right now, we know the wait time is too long.

Now I'm going to talk about something that is also really near and dear to my heart, and that is the youth services piece of this bill. I spent 23 years as a career and employment counsellor before coming into public life, so most of my adult life was working with young people. I definitely have a spot for young people, tremendous respect and I am endeared to them.

Mr. Speaker, when I was appointed Minister Children, Seniors and Social Development, one of the actions the Premier directed me to carry out was to deliver a youth services program that meets the needs of vulnerable youth in our province. In fact, it was written right in my mandate letter.

I am pleased to say the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* delivers on this commitment. We have made changes which allow a youth under a youth services agreement to receive services up to their 21st birthday, regardless of whether or not they were in care on their 16th birthday.

During consultations, we heard repeatedly that the youth services program was too restrictive. We heard it prevented youth from receiving important services they needed because of age and eligibility restrictions. So what do we do, Mr. Speaker? We fixed that.

The legislation is now more open for youth so they can avail of important services that we offer. It also allows for greater protection for youth, as the duty to report maltreatment now includes youth age 16 and 17. It is our intent that with these changes to the program we can help youth transition more successfully into adulthood and give them the tools they need to be active, productive members of our society.

Sometimes it's hard to measure the tangible results with the types of things that we are talking about today, but if you can provide the supports to youth at that vulnerable time in their life where they're somewhere between adolescence and a young adult, there can be tremendous savings realized in other areas. They're not ending up at Her Majesty's Penitentiary and they're not ending up on income support and things like that. That is the intent and spirit of this bill, Mr. Speaker, providing the extra services as you are a little

older that we will see fruitful outcomes from that.

The last piece is around indigenous children and youth. That is a significant part of this bill, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I mentioned it in the press conference or since I was speaking here today, but my staff have made numerous trips to Labrador, in particular, during the consultation process so that they could sit with the indigenous governments and organizations.

Some of these communities – it's no secret – are dealing with really complex issues. We know right across the country there is an overrepresentation of indigenous children and youth in care. I travelled to Ottawa in January where myself and my colleagues across the provinces and territories spent a couple of days discussing that very topic with federal Minister Philpott.

I was thinking about this a lot the last few days, and even thinking about my own experience of growing up where I did so far from this Legislature and from where bills and laws are made around the province. I think a lot of times decisions were made here with not as much understanding of reality on the ground as maybe could have been.

I also read something somewhere that the closer decisions are made to the people most impacted by them, the stronger the likelihood of them to succeed. I think there's a lot of truth in that. Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased with the level of consultation that was carried with the indigenous governments and organizations as we prepared for this bill.

The overrepresentation of indigenous children and youth in care is a serious concern, Mr. Speaker. Not just for me as the minister in this department and I would venture to say not even just for my colleagues on this side of the House, but all Members in this House of Assembly. We are working hard to address this issue, including our commitment to work co-operatively with both the inquiry into the treatment of Innu children in care and the Child and Youth Advocate's review of child protection services in Inuit communities.

We also highlighted the need to make significant changes to our legislation with respect to indigenous children and youth. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that through direct consultations with the indigenous organizations and governments, we have included substantial changes to the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* which addresses indigenous involvement in service coordination and planning, information sharing and, very importantly, inclusion of cultural and community connections in decision making regarding an indigenous child or youth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stress to this House today the significance of this recognition. The current act does not directly mention our indigenous governments or organizations at all. This is a first for child protection legislation in this province. This inclusion is meaningful for indigenous children, youth and families. These are meaningful changes, Mr. Speaker, which acknowledge the uniqueness of indigenous cultures and ensure that whatever decisions are made for indigenous children and youth, they are done with culture in mind. It also ensures indigenous representatives are aware of protective intervention hearings and other hearings pertaining to the supervision and custody of indigenous children and youth.

We have extensively reviewed legislation from across the country and this new legislation is now in line with others in Canada. I am very pleased to be able to say that and to share that with this House. The fact that the current act made no mention and this act is so focused in that area, Mr. Speaker, I believe it means we are moving in the right direction. I hope it will show the indigenous governments and leaders around the province that we've certainly listened to the feedback and we have incorporated and weaved into the bill, wherever possible, that feedback.

There has been much discussion over the last several years about truth and reconciliation. Our own government, I am proud to say, supports the calls to action. With this legislation, we will be addressing several action items, particularly those addressing children in care being placed in culturally appropriate environments.

I was just going to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, the four calls to action in the truth and

reconciliation that are woven throughout and we have addressed in this act, include: Keeping Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so; affirm the right of Aboriginal governments to establish and maintain their own child welfare agencies; require all child welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account when making their decision making; establish, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate.

Those are the four calls to action in the truth and reconciliation related to my department and that are woven throughout this bill. I'm pleased that I believe we have addressed all of them, Mr. Speaker.

Another provision I am especially proud of is this legislation will provide authority to delegate functions and services to indigenous governments and organizations. This is something that is happening in other regions of our country and ensures indigenous agencies deliver some or all of the child welfare services in a community directly.

Mr. Speaker, it ensures indigenous agencies deliver some or all of the child welfare services in a community directly. I know this is something that the Nunatsiavut Government, the Mushuau Innu Nation, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation and Miawpukek First Nation are especially interested in delivering. I look forward to working with these indigenous governments and organizations to move forward on this particular provision.

Mr. Speaker, as an indigenous person, I am proud that I am the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development who is bringing forward these provisions. I didn't keep it quite all together in a press conference earlier. Like you put so much work into this, you know some of the challenges, the sad stories. Every day you wish you could fix all the problems – you can't. I often say to staff, let's fix one today, let's fix one.

There are so many sad stories, Mr. Speaker, but there are also very positive stories. I wish I had the time on the clock to share some of the positive ones about the tremendous people,

about the community partners we work with and do what we can to help improve the lives of those children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, here in this particular case, I have been afforded a tremendous privilege that I will never forget. I got to be this person to bring forward this particular bill, Bill 14. I truly believe the provisions for indigenous children and youth are a tremendous step forward for our province. It shows our commitment to work with indigenous governments and organizations to address these very serious issues. These provisions are an important step forward in reconciliation and ensuring indigenous children and youth involved in the child protection system retain those all-important connections to their families and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded all the time when I travel back and forth on the weekends to my district, it's a world away from here. It takes me a whole day to get there and a whole day to come back. Then you think about children that get taken from some of these communities and are taken so far away and what they experience. So I'm very pleased we're going to be able to address and hopefully minimize some of that, help keep children in their communities and with kin.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the final point in this bill is around licensing and regulation. I have spoken in this hon. House about the need for foster parents. Although we work hard to recruit more foster parents, the reality is there are too few foster homes to meet the needs of all children and youth in care.

I was giving this some thought as well, Mr. Speaker. Times have changed today. When you look back to maybe fostering a decade or two decades ago, maybe you had one parent that was in the home and it was easier to take in children. Now most families, you have two people that work outside the home. We have more children it seems with complex needs in society, and so we're always challenged.

Before I move on, I do want to just toss a bouquet out there in this province today to anyone who has ever taken on fostering. I don't think I could do it, Mr. Speaker. My hat goes off

to them and my heart goes out to them. It's very, very important work they do.

Last fall, I got to sign a proclamation and declare Foster Families Week. Some of the stories there, you talk to people who have been fostering for 25 years. Then you have someone that quietly says over their shoulder: I do it because someone gave me a chance. I was in foster care, I bounced from home to home and then someone took me in and kept me until I aged out. It's powerful stuff, Mr. Speaker.

We're not talking about roads, infrastructure and capital works. I say it all the time, those things are important. We have lively, spirited debate here in the House, as it should be, about those things. We all put our name forward and we want to do our part to make our little corner of the world better, but at the end of the day it all comes down to relationships. Life is about the places you've been, the people you met and the memories you made along the way. It's the relationships with colleagues, with family and with community. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, it must be daunting for children to feel they don't have anyone, they don't have family.

In my district, Mr. Speaker, I know a family who has been fostering for at least 25 years and here are the kinds of things they do. When the man in that household was going through a very difficult time medically, some health issues, they thought we won't foster right now because we're not sure about his health. They had taken three children in. Three young boys they had taken in as an emergency placement, but they did not keep them because of the health issues of the individual.

Once they were taken out of Labrador in my district, the family didn't know where they went. They get a call from this boy, the oldest boy. He was not very old, 10 or 12. Somehow he got the phone number and he called this lady. He said: They're going to separate us. He said: You know you can take us. The end result of that, Mr. Speaker, they took those three boys. They had them for 10 or 12 years until they all graduated, one by one.

That's the kind of things that foster families do. I want to welcome those from Foster Families Associations that are here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: It's important to mention that, Mr. Speaker. Most of us, we get so busy in our lives we don't have time to visit your aunt down the road. Then you have these people who gave so much so that other children would have a chance at life.

That's a story that's near and dear to my heart. It was in my district. I know the people very well. They had these issues and they took these three boys. I remember when the first one graduated and was going off to the Army; he didn't know what he was going to do at Christmas. That family said: You will always have a home to come home to.

Those are the people, Mr. Speaker, the unsung heroes behind the scenes. They're not out looking for accolades, but they are to be commended for the work they do, and I appreciate each of them.

Under the licensing, because we don't have enough foster homes, this means some children and youth are placed in least-preferred residential placements such as group homes. We have looked at what other jurisdictions are doing in this regard, and we can make provisions which improve upon our current practices.

The new *Children, Youth and Families Act* will contain provisions which licence agencies to recruit, assess, train and approve foster homes on behalf of the department. It will also licence non-governmental entities to establish and operate family based and staff residential placements to provide care to children and youth in foster care. While with the family or with a kin is the preferred option if the child can't be reunited with their family, and if not in a family based, last resorts are group homes or individual living arrangements. We don't want that, Mr. Speaker.

It was not so long ago, I remember a time in this province when children were living in hotel rooms. We had a lot of children that were out of province. We had more than 50 children out of province at one point. We have brought them home, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the hard work of staff within the department. We have now

probably no more than a dozen children and children are no longer in hotel rooms.

We are making strides. We're making progress. This new bill, this new piece of legislation will allow us to continue to build upon the success that has already been made.

It's important to note that the responsibility of the health, safety and well-being of children and youth in care remains with our department. This provision, the provision of reaching out to an agency and having them be able to recruit foster homes – I was asked one of those questions related to that after the press conference earlier today, but I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of the health, safety and well-being of children and youth in care will continue to remain with our department. This provision just helps us to increase the number of foster homes.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, those groups that are closer to the ground, they have that local knowledge. They might be aware of foster homes or spaces that we may not have.

As a matter of fact, I was on a flight with my colleague for Lab West in March maybe, we were heading up to Cain's Quest. I was sitting next to a brand new baby that was going to a home. The lady said she had been contacted. I'm not sure if she was on a list, but someone contacted her and said we need a home. That's the kind of local knowledge, that's the stuff that will allow us to build more foster homes which is definitely the preferred option for the child if they can't be with family or kin, certainly more so than group homes and ILAs and things of that nature, Mr. Speaker.

We will also develop regulations which will support this licensing regime and provide accountability. We have already explored part of this model with a pilot project. To date, it has shown early signs of success. By enshrining this in legislation, we can provide more family-based placements to children and youth which is the preferred option always when a child or youth cannot stay with their own family.

Mr. Speaker, these are the major substantive changes proposed for our new child protection legislation. As we get into the bill, there are

other minor legislative adjustments but I believe, or at least I hope, I have captured the spirit of the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* here today.

This is a proud moment, Mr. Speaker, for me. It really, really is. In my dining room there's a big plaque, some of my colleagues here that's been there will have seen, that says: We do not remember days, we remember moments. This is a proud moment for me.

The staff in my department have worked very hard putting this bill together, lots of late nights. I certainly appreciate the efforts of the staff. They have produced a truly comprehensive piece of legislation which builds on the principles of the former legislation to promote the safety and well-being of children and youth who are in need of protective intervention.

It will have tremendous positive impacts for children, youth and families in our province who are in need of our programs and services. It's good I'm nearly finished, Mr. Speaker, because I'm out of water. As I mentioned earlier, this legislation is child and youth centred, family focused and culturally responsive. It is my hope indigenous governments and organizations will be supportive of the new focus – wonderful colleagues I have in the House – which ensures their direct involvement with respect to children and youth in care.

Mr. Speaker, this new legislation is extensive. There will be much work to complete if it receives Royal Assent. For this reason, the legislation will come into effect 12 months from Royal Assent. This will allow us time to put in place new policies and procedures, provide training to all our staff and develop the necessary regulations. I look forward to debate on Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end with something that I heard the premier of Nunavut say in January. He said: We measure the success of our community now by the well-being of our people. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that if we use that here, this act will give us one gigantic step forward to helping the health and well-being of our vulnerable families and youth in care. So I hope hon. Members will

join me in supporting this important piece of legislation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour and a privilege to rise in this hon. House, in my role as critic, to respond to the second reading of Bill 14, the *Children, Youth and Families Act*. I concur with the minister that this certainly is a very significant piece of legislation and it has a lot of components that we feel will be very beneficial to children and youth of this province.

I'm going to spend some of my time talking a little bit in second reading about the background on the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*. The first act was implemented on June 30, 2011. This act governed the conduct of social workers, managers and others in the child and youth protection division of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

The act outlines processes as it relates to child protection. Included in this legislation is a clause which required a statutory review in five years, and that review commenced on June 30, 2016. The statutory review was quite extensive. It included feedback from over 30 organizations, stakeholders and children, families who received services and youth who received or have received services. There were 170 surveys undertaken with employees, including social workers, and a *What We Heard* document was posted on April 17, 2018, a few weeks ago.

The bill we have before us today, Bill 14, will repeal the existing act and replace it with a new act, as the minister explained, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families. This bill has six broad principles, Mr. Speaker. The first being improving information sharing, and this includes formal information sharing arrangements with indigenous leaders; two, enhancing the focus on preserving the family unit; three, expanding permanency options for children and youth who are in foster care; four,

service delivery to indigenous children and youth; five, identifying and supporting youth in need of protection; and the sixth broad principle is the implementation of a licensing regime for out-of-home placements.

With respect to information sharing, during the consultations the department heard that there were barriers to sharing information and that although information sharing could be in the best interests of the child or youth, it could not be facilitated. This legislation specifies that a director or manager can disclose information when it is in the best interests of the child or youth for the purpose of case management planning, integrated service delivery or for criminal court proceedings. That information can be shared with the Child and Youth Advocate or the medical examiner, Mr. Speaker.

This legislation also clarifies that when a social worker can obtain information about the parent to determine if the child requires protective services – so it would clarify when the information would be made available to them or circumstances in which they would be able to acquire it. In policy and practice, the social worker will ask for consent ahead of using the legislative provisions.

The act recognizes that it is ideal to keep children and youth in their homes with their families; however, the safety of the child is paramount. The act clarifies that the safety and well-being of children and youth is more important than keeping them with their families. First and foremost, the safety and well-being of the child will be paramount in this new legislation, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of permanency planning, when a youth is removed from their family, planning must begin and focus on returning the child or youth to their home or placing them in an alternate family home. The preference is to have more children or youth reside with a relative or a significant person as opposed to remaining in foster care. The goal is to achieve permanency in a timelier manner.

One of the tangible changes in this legislation is that instead of issuing temporary court orders, if a social worker believes that the permanency solution is found, then he or she can make a

recommendation to the court to award legal custody, Mr. Speaker. That, again, is another significant piece, I feel, in this legislation.

As the minister has already outlined, indigenous children and youth are also a very huge focus of this new legislation. It includes a definition of indigenous children and youth and acknowledges the uniqueness of indigenous culture.

The legislation has new provisions that were not included in the existing legislation which require that children and youth who are in care have a cultural connection plan, and this must be filed with the court. It requires that when considering placements for children and youth in care, that a connection to their culture and their community must be maintained.

It requires a notice of protective intervention hearings and other hearings to be served to the indigenous representatives. They may be given the ability to be heard in court. As well, it enhances the sharing of information with indigenous governments and organizations. This legislation also includes the provision that the minister can delegate functions and programs to the indigenous governments, with the approval of Cabinet, for them to carry out directly.

The youth services program will continue to be voluntary under this program. Currently, youth can receive services until the age of 21, as long as they are enrolled in an educational or rehabilitation program; but this legislation is going to remove that requirement that they be in an education or rehabilitation program and it will allow the youth to continue to receive services until the age of 21. They will still have to have individual work plans, which will help them with their goals and aspirations.

The age for which mandatory reporting of youth in need of protection is required will increase from 16 to 17. The option for youth to leave custody before the age of 18 will be removed. That certainly helps. In the past, there has sometimes been an issue with having children fall through the cracks between the ages of 16 and 18, in particular. So the new act is addressing that as well, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, there are two streams of programming within the department. If a youth was receiving services on their 16th birthday, they would be entitled to a different level of programs than a youth who is not receiving services on their 16th birthday.

This was referred to by departmental officials during our briefing as two streams. The legislation would remove the two streams, making it a one-program stream. So the youth will be able to receive services up until the age of 21, regardless of whether or not they were receiving services at the time of their 16th birthday.

Licensing and regulation is an area of the bill that will probably have the most questions when we get to Committee of the Whole; although, we still have a significant number of questions that we will pose during the Committee stage.

This legislation will set up a legislative framework for the department to implement a regulatory framework for private agencies to have the ability to licence foster homes. These private agencies will be able to obtain licences to recruit, assess, train and approve foster homes. Non-government entities will be licensed to operate family-based and staff residential placement to provide care to children and youth in foster care.

We don't have a lot of the details at this stage, Mr. Speaker, from the bill itself. Future regulations, we are told, will provide much more of the detail in relation to this aspect of the bill. What we do know is that there is currently a pilot project ongoing with a private company called Key Assets. In this pilot, a child is placed into a family home and Key Assets provide supports around the family. This is the type of program which the legislation and regulatory regime will be promoting. Like I said, we do seek some more information and clarity particularly around that component of this bill.

In comparing Bill 14 with the definitions which currently exist in the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*, most are the same or have some very minor changes to them, but definitions are added for indigenous child, indigenous government or organization, indigenous representative and indigenous youth.

With respect to the general principles of the bill; in the first act there was reference to indigenous cultural identity but in – no, indigenous cultural identity, I'm sure in the first act wasn't there, I'm sorry. The clauses that have been added are indigenous – I'm trying not to say that word clause, Mr. Speaker, in second reading – reference to indigenous cultural identity (f) and the importance of the preferred environment section (h) are added.

It also defines new and specifies that the safety, health and well-being of a child is always more important than having the child remain with their family. That's a major shift in policy, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the legislation itself. I would think it has always been a practice and a policy, but this certainly enshrines that first and foremost the needs of the child are what takes precedence. I think all of these changes that are being brought forward are going to indeed be beneficial to the children and youth of this province who really need our support and our care.

In terms of duty to report; as I said a little while ago, all citizens will have the responsibility for reporting any concerns or abuse they may witness. That duty to report was for children up to the age of 16, and this new bill increases that to the age of 17.

I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, prior even to my time in politics, issues like duty to report, you were aware but you didn't fully understand, I don't think. I think, Minister, in terms of going forward, one of the things we can do in terms of increased awareness around this act and how we promote our children is increased emphasis to the public at large in terms of duty to report. It's certainly something everyone should know and be aware of what their duty is if they see anything that causes concern for the well-being of the child.

In terms of determining the need for protective intervention; this new act expands the provision to include youth in addition to child, and it allows a social worker to determine whether or not a youth is in need of protective intervention.

The order to prohibit conduct has been added to this legislation as well. This section allows a

judge to make interim orders which remain in effect while the hearing is taking place.

I certainly do commend the minister and her staff for quite an extensive, extensive amount of work that has been done on this significant bill. Like the minister has said, it will impact on each and every one of our children in this province, and certainly enhance the lives of those at risk.

There are many other components as well to this new bill, protective intervention hearing. This section will give the judge the ability to permanently transfer custody to a person, other than the child's parent. This is done with the consent of the person who will get custody, the child if they are 12 years old or older, and if the child has been residing with this person for at least six months, Mr. Speaker.

There's another section in the bill that will deal with subsequent orders. In this piece, as the minister has outlined, the inclusion of notifying indigenous representatives of the hearing is included here as well. As the minister has already explained quite well, this is a huge component. The culture of our indigenous children is something they should always have access to, Mr. Speaker.

I know, myself, living close to an indigenous community – for example, their justice circle as a different method, but a cultural method of dealing with issues of concern they have with respect to the law, Mr. Speaker. It works so very, very well. The success rate of their programs is absolutely phenomenal. Who knows best what a child needs other than the ones who love the children the most, and that would be their families, their extended families and their communities at large.

Another quote that's quite common is: "It takes a village to raise a child." That is certainly very, very true. We should be making every effort to keep our indigenous children in close connection with their culture and indigenous communities where possible. These are all aspects of the bill that we, on this side of the House with respect to the Opposition Party, are certainly strongly supportive of. We see these as good changes that are being brought forward here today, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of permanent transfer of custody after the continuous custody order, this section applies to a situation where a child is in the care of a manager under a continuous custody order and the manager or social worker believes there is another person – for example, a family member or an adult significant to the child – in which the child should be placed with. This will allow the social worker or manager to apply to have custody transferred to this individual and permanency custody may be transferred by the judge. This is also an option which social workers can use to help children and youth in care find permanency in a timelier manner.

Mr. Speaker, in my time since I've become a parliamentarian, this is one of the issues that has been expressed to me. Many very fortunate children have found some wonderful, loving homes, and one of the frustrations for their new families is how difficult it is to acquire permanent custody. So this process, we feel, should help in that regard as well.

At this point in my life, I'm getting long in the tooth too, so I might be too old, who knows when I finish; and being in politics, I'm away from home far too much; but foster parenting is something that has always appealed to me and, in particular, for the older children.

Even in looking at this bill, as a critic, I'm thinking to myself: My gosh, there are a whole lot of wonderful things in this bill that will enable people like me who are considering becoming foster parents to really feel comfortable that there is strong legislation in place that will help support foster parents as well as the children, and any people who are caregivers for the children. Be they significant people, extended family, grandparents, but certainly a greater level of comfort that if the placement seems to be an ideal permanency placement then, hopefully, it should be facilitated a little easier with the passing of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

I'm flipping my pages now kind of quickly because most of these are questions that we will have once we get to Committee of the Whole. The other piece that I did want to talk about before I conclude my commentary is again back to the whole delegation section; that's the last part of the bill. It will allow the minister to

delegate programs and services to the indigenous governments or organizations by way of an agreement with Cabinet approval.

This is something that I understand from the *What We Heard* document and various discussions that we've had with indigenous communities, some even during our time with the mental health and addictions committee, that the local governments of the indigenous communities sometimes can offer their own unique solutions that may work better in some circumstances, Mr. Speaker. This really opens the door to those conversations and to those types of agreements coming forward.

One of the things that, I guess, as an Official Opposition we would like to say, with respect to this piece of the legislation, is to ensure that adequate resources and funding are allocated to ensure the implementation of this bill is successful. There may be components of it which will require additional resources. We certainly would like to see government strongly committed to ensuring whatever resources are needed to carry out the amendments to this bill and are put in place.

The last part of the bill pretty much deals with regulations. There will be a vast regulatory authority for the minister and the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, Mr. Speaker. Those regulations we haven't seen yet and they will be forthcoming. That's an area where all persons interested in this bill will want to take another look as well and ensure that the regulations are also meeting what has been expressed in the *What We Heard* document.

Overall, I have to say we often get up in this House and it is our job and our role as Opposition to point out issues and concerns where they exist, but it's also our job, Mr. Speaker, to point out good things that we see. From time to time, we do see good things. I would have to say with the exception of a few questions we still have outstanding that we're looking for some clarity on, I can safely and confidently say that overall we're pleased with this bill; we're pleased with the changes that are being brought forward.

We do think it will have a very positive impact on the children and youth of Newfoundland and

Labrador, as well as the families of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, the families of these children and youth, the foster families who I know dearly love the children that come into their care. Overall, hopefully this will make Newfoundland and Labrador a better place for our children, youth and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. D. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand here in this House of Assembly today to speak to Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families.

I'd just like to thank the Member opposite from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for all of her kind words. I'm glad to see her today at the media release when the minister spoke and that she had the opportunity to speak to media after and showed her support towards it. I'm sure all Members in this hon. House will be doing the same today. It's a great bill. A lot of work and time and effort have gone into it. What you see here today, since I've been here a little over two years, it's probably the thickest bill that has been passed in this House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize our friends up in the balcony from the Foster Families Association and to thank them for all the great work that they do in our province, uniting children with the families. I wish them much continued success and we appreciate everything that you do, so thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. D. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development spoke so elegant and passionate earlier. She highlighted that the staff have done such an outstanding job of putting this document together. She also did an excellent job explaining what this legislation we are going to be debating here today. I've been honoured to serve as the parliamentary secretary to the minister since 2015, shortly after I was elected.

I have supported the minister and the department throughout that time and I've experienced first-hand the dedication, commitment and tireless advocacy that our social workers carry out for the children and youth in our province each and every day, Mr. Speaker. The protection and care of vulnerable children and youth is a core value of our government. Unless you're emerged in this field, it is very hard to appreciate the type of issues that come forward. I certainly garner a whole new respect for the many social workers who assess risk on a daily basis and make the best decisions for the children or youth at risk.

The backbone for the work is based on this legislation, Mr. Speaker. Currently that is the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* but will be replaced with the new legislation: *Children, Youth and Families Act*. The new act does not change our focus; it remains children and youth centred. What this means is that it is the guide by which all social workers with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development will conduct their work.

These social workers investigate allegations of maltreatment and provide necessary interventions, supports and services to families. Then, together with the family, they develop a plan to reduce the identified risk. Safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments are essential to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to help all children and youth reach their full potential. As a government, we recognize the child protection system cannot remain static. We must ensure it evolves so that it continues to meet the needs of children, youth and their families.

Today's legislation came out of extensive consultation with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development since 2016. The *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* clearly indicates under section 80 that a statutory review shall be completed every five years and shall include public consultations. I'm happy to note that in the new *Child, Youth and Families Act* remains this statutory provision under section 102.

It is by working with our families, stakeholders and social workers in this matter that we can enhance child protection legislation which benefits children and youth. As a collective, we

need to work together to help children grow up to be healthy and productive citizens so that they in turn can build stronger and safer families and communities for their children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, every accomplishment we make in the field of child protection can be credited to the input, hard work and co-operation from everyone in our province who is committed to enhancing our child protection system. Every stakeholder and individual's voice must be heard. It is these voices which have formed the new *Child, Youth and Families Act*.

The consultation process was lengthy and comprehensive. We worked closely with the Office of Public Engagement to develop and design a consultation process that would ensure all those interested in providing feedback on the child protection legislation, including those directly impacted by any changes made in the act, would have every opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, this included directly seeking input from stakeholders and the general public on the current act through a comprehensive engagement approach that included targeted in-person and virtual dialogue sessions, focus groups and questionnaires. A discussion guide was also posted on the department's website for interested individuals and groups to send written submissions directly to our department.

We had over 30 stakeholder groups participate and we received over 170 surveys from children, youth, families and staff of the Department of CSSD. I hope that all these groups and individuals will be able to see their impacts in this new legislation. I personally want to thank all those groups and individuals for taking the time out of their busy days and providing some very thought-provoking and constructive suggestions to our department. Together, we have worked hard to produce what is a positive and forward-thinking legislation.

As the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development mentioned, this new act is progressive and builds on the principles contained in the current *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*. It may not have been the original intention to create a new act from the offset; however, taking into account the changes which resulted from the consultation as

well as the jurisdictional and child protection legislative reviews, it certainly evolved into a new legislation.

The *Child, Youth and Families Act*, as the minister said, is child and youth centred, family focused and culturally responsive. It is about doing what's best for children, youth and their families.

Mr. Speaker, substantive changes to child protection in this legislation include: an enhanced focus on maintaining children and youth in their family homes by recognizing the role of family in promoting the safety and well-being of children and youth; by identifying and supporting youth in need of protection by increasing the scope of duty to report to include youth; by removing restrictions so that all youth under a youth services agreement can receive services until they reach the age of 21, which was previously the age of 19; expanding permanency options for children and youth by establishing a process so that children and youth who are declared in need of protective intervention by a judge can be placed in permanent custody of a person, such as relative or other significant to that child or youth; by improving information sharing to assist in the protection of children and youth; establishing a licensing and regulatory framework for agencies, family-based placement providers and residential placement providers to increase accountability and provide options to increase the number of foster homes.

Also, by strengthening support deliveries to indigenous children, youth and their families, requiring that a cultural connection plan for an indigenous child or an indigenous youth who is removed from his or her home will be included in the plan that is filed with the court for the indigenous child or indigenous youth.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, establishing the ability for indigenous representation of prescribed indigenous governments or organizations to be heard in the courtroom; thirdly, requiring specific placement considerations for indigenous children and indigenous youth who are in care or custody of their manager; also requiring that notice of hearings relating to the supervision and custody of an indigenous child or an indigenous youth be served to indigenous representation;

and, finally, providing authority to delegate functions and services under the act to an indigenous government organization.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister mentioned in her speech, there has been much discussion over the last several years about truth and reconciliation. Our own government, I'm very proud to say, supports the *Calls to Action*. With this legislation, we will be addressing several action items, particularly those addressing children in care being placed in culturally appropriate environments.

Changes to the act support the following four *Calls to Action*: provide adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside; secondly, to affirm the right of Aboriginal governments to establish and maintain their own child-welfare agencies; third, to require all child-welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account into their decision making; and, finally, establish, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of our Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has gone into these areas into depth, but I would like to focus a little more of my time to speak to the youth services provision. As part of the CSSD minister's mandate, the Premier provided direction to review the Youth Services Program to ensure that the program is responsive to the unique needs of our youth. Because a statutory review process was already scheduled to take place, the department decided to incorporate the review of youth services into this process.

We had heard from a number of our partners that some of our young people need extra help as they transition into adulthood. The program did not have the flexibility needed as it was too restrictive and it prevented youth from receiving necessary services because of age and eligibility requirements.

Changes brought about in the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* will remove some of

these restrictions and will mean that all youth under the age of 21 will now be able to avail of these services. This is regardless of whether they were in care on their 16th birthday.

We will increase the scope of duty to report maltreatment to youth so it is mandatory for the public to report youth, ages 16 and 17 years old, in need of protection. We will remove the requirement for youth to be in an educational or rehabilitative program in order to receive these services. This will be changed to a requirement that the youth engage in an individualized plan that will help address the youth's strengths and also their needs.

Another change to increase the support provided to youth will remove the option for youth to leave continuous custody before their 18th birthday. Thus, ensuring the youth continue the support received by a social worker, these important transition years, as they move towards their adult years. These are positive enhancements which I feel many of our stakeholders will be very pleased with.

During my time as parliamentary secretary with this department, I've had the opportunity to address several of these groups such as Choices for Youth, Foster Families Association and they do tremendous work in helping youth within our communities. We are proud of the relationship we have with these groups. These legislative changes will do much to help vulnerable youth in our province and give them the extra tools that they need as they move into adult years.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will be supporting Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families and I ask all hon. Members in this House to also support this legislation. It is progressive and, more importantly, it keeps the protection and care of children and youth at its very core.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very pleased today to stand and speak to Bill 14, which is called *Children, Youth and Families Act* and especially pleased because I was here in the House when the current act came in, in 2011, and I remember at that time not being happy with the new act. One of the reasons that I wasn't was because the act in 2011 had lost the emphasis on the family unit and supporting parents and helping them keep children in the home, if it was a safe place to be.

That was a real concern of mine and of ours – our caucus at the time. To now see this new bill, which is before us today, recognizing that a family is an essential part of what needs to be considered if we're going to help our children, it really pleases me very much. I want to thank the minister for giving that direction because I'm sure she did give that direction. Not only do we hope that family is going to be considered, family is actually in the title, as I said a minute ago. It's the *Children, Youth and Families Act*.

Children don't exist in isolation. We all know how important it is, the relationship between parents and children. It's very often that parents are not at fault for not being able to parent. We sometimes take for granted that parenting comes naturally. I think we all, in this House and anybody watching, have enough experience to know that in actual fact it don't come naturally. We all parent in different ways, but we have enough experience in our community to know that very often people need help with parenting. That happens specifically, I think, in our current situation because of the fact of the changes in how community has developed over the years.

We, for the most part, don't have the same sense of family community and family being broader than just the immediate family. The extended family is not as strong as it used to be, and I think that parenting gets learned through extended families in many ways. Now, bad parenting can get learned that way as well, but I think we do have a responsibility to make sure that parents and those who are charged with taking care of children do understand good parenting.

So I'm really pleased that the bill today is putting family back in. Again, the focus, of course, is the safety of children; that children are secure, that they're safe, that they're being taken

care of. We don't want children in situations where they're not safe.

The realization that sometimes it's not the fault of the family, it's not the fault of the parents if they don't have the full environment that's needed for the child – and experience tells us that working with the families can really benefit both the parents and the children. That's why I was really pleased to hear the minister talking about the Triple P program, Positive Parenting Program, which has been introduced into the province. She did talk about how successful this is in other places. I'm sure we're already experiencing that it's successful here as well.

There are so many ways in which families need support; the Positive Parenting Program is one way. Sometimes we'll see that parents may need access to mental health counselling, addictions counselling and family therapy. There are so many things that are necessary to help parents, but we do know that here in the province right now we have waiting lists. There are parents who need supports, who need assistance, but waiting lists become a barrier for them. I think this is a concern that we need to keep in mind. It's wonderful to have on paper what we want to achieve, and that's what an act is about, but we also have to make sure that everything is there so that what's on paper becomes operative.

Later on, when we go into Committee, I will have some questions about some details like that, but the theme that I'm going to keep coming back to is the need for resources. We can have everything on paper but if we don't have the resources, if we don't have the human resources, if we don't have the resources to be able to offer parents and to offer it in a timely way, then what we have on paper will mean nothing.

There's a key role for social workers in keeping children in the home. You have to have people who are working on a regular basis and get to know the families to help them in the practical ways that they need help in order to make sure that the environment is safe. Social workers have a key role there. It can be a very positive role because it can be a preventative role, a role in even knowing families ahead of time, dealing with families before children exhibit sometimes by running away or whatever, a need.

Social workers who develop relationships with families can play a preventative role as well as a role in times of crisis, as well as a role in working with the families as parents move in the direction of better parenting.

Right now, I know some social workers on the front lines and they never stop. They are overworked. I know social workers who at 10 o'clock at night are doing their paperwork and they're tired. They burn out.

What we have in this bill, in order to make it operative, in order to make sure the high principles that are in the bill, and they are wonderful principles, that those high principles can be acted on. That concretely what's here can happen.

Families have a lot of stress. There can be financial hardships, and that's not just with people who are on income assistance. You can have families where both parents are working and still the stress of trying to hold everything together, especially as the cost of living goes up, as salaries do not move with the cost of living.

You also have addictions issues that parents have, you have health issues. Sometimes you can have a family where everything has been going fine and all of a sudden there's a crisis, and in that crisis children become caught. The role of social worker is to be able to help people find their way out.

We also very often will have families where the families are badly housed. We can't just have the Department of CCSD, all by itself, dealing with the issue because we need to look at what are the infrastructures that are needed for family. Like in the case of adequate housing and good housing, sometimes you need another department involved. So you do need interdepartmental co-operation I think with some of the issues that are here. Certainly, I think there's a role for Health and Community Services with some of the concerns that are here in this bill.

An interdepartmental approach is extremely important. I think that approach was taken in the consultations but I think it also has to be taken in the way that the department operates, a need to work together to make sure that all systems are

working together because it's systemic issues we're talking about here. The whole system needs to be responsive to vulnerable families. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development comes in as well. Anywhere that children are impacted, any department that deals with children needs to work with CSSD.

I do understand the bill that we're talking about is dealing with children who need protective care. I realize that, but sometimes making sure that families are healthy, making sure that families have adequate housing, making sure that we have families whose income is adequate, that will ensure, or at least help to ensure, that children don't get into the situation of needing protective care. That's why I think the ministry needs to look at the whole interaction piece, the whole thing of the departments working together. I don't see exact reference to that in the bill. I do understand that it is dealing with protective care, but these other pieces need to be a part of that.

We were told during *Budget 2018* Estimates about the situation with regard to foster families. The minister mentioned the issue of foster families. My colleagues have recognized – they're not there now but the members of the Foster Families Association have been here. It's a wonderful association. Over the years I have supported them and gone to their events, et cetera. It's just wonderful every time I go, to meet the families who are there.

We do know there are problems in finding situations for families, especially if you have large sibling groups, if you have two, three or four children and you want to try to keep them together, or children with complex needs. There are major issues and challenges in getting foster families.

We were told in Estimates that in 2017 there had been an increase in the growth of Level 4 placements. Level 4 placements are residences run by agencies. While sometimes these are necessary, I don't think they are the optimal thing to go after. An increase in Level 4 placements can become problematic.

Again, we were told this in Estimates, that there was an interdepartmental committee formed to

work on that. I like that, the fact it's interdepartmental. Because of the work of this interdepartmental committee, the number of new Level 4 placements is going down. This is extremely important. It's something that really made me feel good when I heard it. The other thing we've learned is that the number of foster homes has increased. We know there's been extra money by government put into helping these things happen.

We also have pilot projects supporting the foster homes. The money for these pilot projects is also in this year's budget. I think we're going to see an improvement when it comes to foster homes, where they're necessary, and less reliance on Level 4 residences. We only want children in that kind of a situation if it's absolutely essential.

The other thing that's really important is the whole thing of kinship custody. This is something I think the minister referred to. It sort of had been the way things went in our communities in the past. If a mother died, for example – and we know in rural Newfoundland and Labrador over the years, we did have a lot of women who died in childbirth, giving birth. It would sort of be automatic, another relative would take over. The sister of the woman who died, for example, might take over. Children were taken care of by their families.

Then there were children who didn't get taken care of by their families. In those days we had orphanages and children ended up in orphanages. I think what's really good now, something that happened naturally in many communities and, certainly, continues to happen in communities in our province right now – especially in indigenous communities, but not only in indigenous communities – social workers are going to be able to move forward with recognizing that maybe there's a relative that can help with children.

Excuse me; I think a number of us are having cold problems here in the House.

So this is a whole new thing that's so important. It extends the notion of family, that there's more to the family than just the parents. And being able to recognize that maybe there is an aunt or an older sister, whatever, but people there who

are blood relations who love these children as well and could have custody of the children. This is really a step forward.

Right now, there's a lot of red tape around that, a lot of court procedures that we have to go through. But now you will be able to have social workers recommending to the court that there be a kinship connection, and that children be taken over through kinship custody. I think that's a wonderful move forward, Mr. Speaker.

I know that speaking to people in the community – and I think it happened in the consultations – this was something that was talked about and looked for and it is seen as a positive move. Social workers who are working with family members, they get a good sense of the families. They get a good sense of what the overall environment is. So they can really make wise recommendations. To see the importance of their role, I think, is really good.

I only have a couple of minutes left and I don't want to sit down without talking about the whole new approach with regard to indigenous children and youth. Besides having a section under delegation, the section called delegation, besides having a whole section on that, you also have the presence of indigenous government and organizations recognized throughout the act as well.

As one social worker – whom I was talking to actually today – said to me: It's so good; we have to be gotten out of there and the indigenous communities themselves, they have to be given the right to continue taking care of the children. We have to move out.

So the recognition that indigenous governments and organizations are the ones to not only be consulted, but to be involved in taking care of the children is really, really important. The first priority has to be keeping those children in their communities. We know that's been a problem – not only in this province, but in this province it has been a problem. The minister alluded to it as well. So being able to keep them in their communities is number one.

The provision, for example, for an indigenous representative identified for any indigenous child is really, really important and the provision

for the minister to delegate functions to indigenous organizations through an agreement. The agreement is important in that you have the department working with the indigenous organization or the indigenous government, the indigenous community, but an agreement that we ensure that the children are going to be taken care of, that they're going to be safe.

Once again, as I said earlier, resources are the big thing. There has to be adequate resources. For the indigenous communities, in particular, to raise their level of services, they are going to require resources. They're going to require more training, more training for those who will be in professional positions, training so that parents can be trained as well.

Again, I say to government, what we have on paper is wonderful, but we're going to have to make sure that resources are put in place to make it happen. I look forward to Committee stage, Mr. Speaker, when I can get at some details.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly feel privileged to rise on my feet today and speak to Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families. Mr. Speaker, 5,520, that's how many children in our province are under that responsibility of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development; 900 of those are in foster care; and in excessive of 300 of that 900 are Aboriginal children that have been removed from their homes.

I'm a former foster parent, Mr. Speaker. I know what it's like to have children and to have foster children, and how you task yourself with living up to their expectations of you. When you say that you can't love a child that's not your own, that's not true and certainly, all around the province, we've seen that.

There is another side to this story, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about. I often say that in my position as an MHA for the District of Torngat Mountains that I work for two departments. I work for the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and I work for the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

Mr. Speaker, it's not a good feeling when you get a call from a mother that you know that is saying to you, blunt face, social services is taking my kids. What can you do to help? Now, Mr. Speaker, that's the task that I would not wish on anyone.

Under the old bill or the old guidelines, there was an interest in the protection of children, but the guidance that social workers operated under, under the old act, was exactly that: the protection of the children. In my conversations with front-line workers, with social workers, they feel the frustration of having to act on what guidelines they're given. When you look at this bill, you can tell by the 77 pages that's involved that it took a tremendous amount of work by the minister and the parliamentary assistant and the staff at CCSO.

A lot of the work came as a result of consultations throughout the province with different groups, with the Foster Families Association, with the Aboriginal groups and with many other entities that had input, and from children themselves.

Mr. Speaker, once you try and compile all that and you try to bring it forward, it takes a lot of time and it takes a lot of energy and it takes a lot of work. But what you get, when you get a bill that's totally different than what social workers had to act on in the past, it's a game changer when you look at care for our children in our province.

For the 312-plus children that are removed from their community, in a lot of cases they're also removed from the region. I've actually travelled from my hometown to Roddickton and picked up a foster child and brought them back. You kind of place yourself in two worlds: one, as a parent losing a child; it's not a good feeling. And the social workers have to operate in that capacity. You have to look out for the protection

of the children; that's under the old act. But you also have foster parents who are kind, who are receptive and they grow attached to children. Believe me, I know; I've been there.

When that person carries on in their life and goes out of our life, Mr. Speaker, there's a void there. There's an emptiness left there, a sense of loss that I'm sure many, if not all, foster parents in this province feel that.

The one thing the old act brought forward is that it didn't look at family connection. Being an Aboriginal person, like any other family, you have to look at extended family. Extended family goes through a long list of family members that have never been asked, had never been consulted before when they looked at care of the children other than maybe adoption. What this act does is it allows for sharing information which I think – and the minister spoke about this in quite a bit of depth – is one of the most important factors when you're looking for a solution to solve or in child intervention.

Back a long time ago, Mr. Speaker, before there was any intervention by a child care agency, it was the families that took it upon themselves to make placements for children that needed care. In a lot of cases there were tragedies where children were left without any care. Care was provided; it was done through the families, through the family tree and the family connections.

The old act that was proclaimed, I think, in 2011, Mr. Speaker, took that away. It allowed intervention. The intent there was to certainly care for the children, but in oversight they saw that removal of children was the way to go. You look at some of the issues that have arisen out of concern around child care. We have an inquiry into child care with the Innu Nation; we have a child care review with the Child and Youth Advocate. Maybe – just maybe – if this bill would have been brought forward a long time ago, we could have avoided that.

When you look at some of the reasons why children are removed – and I know my hon. colleague across the way, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, touched on some of those issues, some of the tragic events that lead to it. When you look at the Truth and

Reconciliation report and the *Calls to Action*, the minister said we just hit four in one shot, which is very commendable and speaks volumes to the content of this bill.

You had children that were removed from home, not for their own protection but for their education. We saw the dark side that came through that, the dark period in our lives. Mr. Speaker, these kids had kids. Once you're removed from the family component of how knowledge is passed down through family first, how do you parent? How do you become an effective parent? This is just one, I guess, oversight that was placed on some of the Aboriginal people in the best interest of delivering an education. It certainly had its faults.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other thing this bill focuses on is taking into account the family factor doesn't have to be in the same community. I've had foster kids, while I was living in Makkovik, from Nain, but you still had that connection because of your culture and what you have to offer, but when a child is removed – and sometimes, as my hon. colleague mentioned, out of the country or out of the province.

I actually worked with a family that were looking to get custody of their grandchildren in Alberta. When you work with two provincial jurisdictions that operate differently, this is a family of four that were going to be split up and distributed to foster families in Alberta. It took a lot of work but we actually did get that family back. They're now living with their grandparents and certainly enjoying life; whereas before, the family unit would have been non-existent.

My hon. colleague from Lewisporte - Twillingate talked about the youth support structures. Although I'm going to go primarily on the Aboriginal component, it is an important mechanism for dealing with children as they get older and their needs change. For example, they can voluntarily stay in the social system now under award or under a social worker's guidance until they're 21 years old, which means they will go through secondary or high school education which mean they will go through post-secondary probably, and they will be better geared to take themselves and their future into the future.

I think that's a really important mechanism. I'm certainly glad to hear the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune say that she's standing and supporting this bill.

I know the minister was very passionate, and certainly when you're working with families, you can't help but become emotionally involved, emotionally attached. Sometimes it's emotions of joy and happiness, but sometimes it's not. It's emotion of loss and the sadness that goes with it.

When I talk to social workers, sometimes in the opinion of parents they're the most hated people in the world – but they're doing their job – because of what they have to do. They're the picture of child care if you may want it, but to some families they're the picture of child removal.

I think this act gives those social workers more tools to work with the community, with the extended family and with other caregivers so that the care for the child is not just child protection, it's family care. More often than not, you walk around in our small communities and you hear people say: It takes a whole community to raise a child. Mr. Speaker, this bill certainly opens that avenue up so that the community can become more involved.

I find myself sometimes as a go-between or caught in the middle with provincial jurisdiction and NunatuKavut jurisdiction because I work with the deputy minister of health and social development. We talked about this for the last seven years. I know they're glad to see this bill coming because it opens up communication between the department and another government. It opens up communication between the department and the Innu Nation, NunatuKavut, the Miawpukek, the Qalipu. Those avenues have now brought into resolution, whereas before it created conflict.

So I'm really glad this bill has finally come forward. I know it's a long time coming, but it takes a lot of work. I'm certainly hopeful that every Member in this House will stand and support Bill 14.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'd like to adjourn debate on Bill 14, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the debate do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 9, second reading of Bill 13.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991 be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991." (Bill 13)

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

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

I'm happy to stand here today and speak to the *Jury Act, 1991* and an amendment that we are proposing for this piece of legislation. What I'm hoping to do is maybe give some context and background as to why we're doing this and it might even be a bit of an education as to juries in and of themselves.

If one were to look at the bill itself that we have here, the amendment, what we're amending is section 9 of the current act is being repealed and the following substituted: "9(1) A person who is (a) 75 years of age or older; (b) mentally or physically incapacitated; or (c) suffering from an illness which may reasonably be expected to be permanent shall, on application, be exempted permanently from serving as a juror."

Now previous to this, that age, instead of 75 it had been 65. If you were above the age of 65 you could be exempted and were exempted from serving as a juror in a criminal trial.

I want to talk a bit about perhaps just jury trials in and of themselves. Under our Charter, is any person who is accused and going to trial on a criminal charge, usually it's indictable offences, but anything that has a possible jail time of five years or above has the right to a trial by a jury; a jury being made up of their peers. That's found under section 11 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That excludes military tribunals, people that are charged under military law.

Just some background into jury trials; these are held in our Supreme Court. Right now we have Supreme Courts in Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Bank, Grand Falls-Windsor, Happy Valley-Goose Bay – which I know the Speaker would be familiar with that court – and St. John's. When we talk about juries, we'll get into some interesting details here.

The *Jury Act, 1991* provides that each Canadian citizen resident in the province, at least 18 years of age or older, has the right and duty to serve as a juror unless they are exempted or disqualified under the act.

Persons disqualified under the act include: – again, this is interesting, these people cannot serve as jurors – a member, officer, or employee of Parliament, Privy Council of Canada; House of Assembly, Executive Council of our province; an officer or employee of Justice Canada, the federal Solicitor-General; the Department of Justice and Public Safety; a judge, lawyer; court official; a sheriff or sheriff's officer; police officer; warden, correctional officer or person employed in a penitentiary, prison or correctional institution; a spouse of any one of the aforementioned

individuals; a person charged with an indictable offence; a person who has served a sentence for an indictable offence in the last five years and who has not received a pardon; or a person who is unable to speak or understand the language in which a trial is to be conducted, and person who is disqualified cannot serve on a jury.

The act also sets out a number of exemptions and grounds for exemption which would relieve an otherwise qualified individual from requirement to serve on a jury. There are several grounds there, including where it would cause serious hardship or loss to the juror or others.

For example, that would be a person who during the day provides care for a child who's not in school under a certain age; or if you're caring for an aged or infirm person who requires care during the day; mentally incompetent individuals. It may conflict with a juror's pastoral or religious duties or beliefs, and there is also an exemption for age.

So, these are the people that cannot serve on juries, or the people that may make application and ask not to serve on juries. Now, you might say, why is that important? Well, what I want to do is give some stats right now on where we are in this province as it relates to jury trials.

In the last five years, we've had 129 jury trials scheduled. To make sure there are a pool of jurors able to be selected for these matters, there were 47,570 summonses to appear for jury duty issued for those trials. Out of the 129, only 50 actually proceeded. Now, there are a bunch of reasons why it might not happen. The accused could change their plea. There could be a change of counsel. You can opt for a different – you can go from judge and jury back down to judge. Either way, the work that's done by the High Sheriff's Office, which controls the *Jury Act* basically, and controls the pool of jurors, they still have to do the work. They have to create the list and they have to send the summonses out to individuals.

What we've seen, I want to get into – we've seen that there have been a substantial number, 129 over the last five years is a high number. Fifty of those have gone ahead. Right now, I believe, for this calendar year or the next couple of years, we have 14 jury trials scheduled.

That's a large number. Each one of those – I might have it here in my notes somewhere – there's a huge pool of people that are brought in and then put through the challenge.

I will say part of this debate that won't happen here, there have been some talks, especially on the federal level, about changes that need to happen to jury selection. We're not talking about that here; when we talk about pre-emptory challenges and the constitution of juries, that's a very big discussion and one that is happening across the country. We've seen, especially in many cases – we saw a case from out west recently where there was a finding of not guilty. That was a jury trial. That led to a significant amount of discussion and debate throughout the country on how juries are selected. That's not the purpose of this particular amendment here.

Since 2014, 6,050 people who have reached the age of at least 65 years old have been granted a permanent exemption on the grounds of their age. Over 6,000 people, just by virtue of the fact they're 65, are permanently exempted. That amounts to about 953 people a year or roughly that's about 10 per cent of the people receiving summonses. That's not a small number.

Although the age profile of these people is unknown, what we can say is approximately 63 per cent of our population who are at least age 65 are between the ages of 65 and 75. It's reasonable to do an estimation that over 3,800 of the people that were granted a permanent exemption previously, based on age since 2014, were not at least 75 and wouldn't have gotten that exemption. That's a significant number.

We get into some more demographic stats here which I think are important. Twenty-one per cent right now of our population is 65 years of age or older. We all know that is a number that's going to get larger. We all know that demographic is growing; in fact, it's supposed to hit 25 per cent in the not-too-distant future.

Grand Bank, Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor area has had the highest percentage of the population for these courts within the 65-to-75 age bracket at 15 per cent, 13 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. In Gander it goes down a little bit. In St. John's it's down to nine and

actually, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay it's, I think, 6 per cent.

In 2036, in this province our population aged 65 or older will be at 30 per cent. That number continues to rise. I think people see where we're going with this amendment and the need for it.

Basically, what we're suggesting here is we need to amend our act to be responsive to we have an increase in the number of jury trials. Again, I don't have to get into the fundamental importance of individuals being able to have a trial and being judged by a jury of their peers and making sure that we have people that can do that. I don't think there's going to be any questioning that. We also have to look at the demographics of our province and the age of population that we have here.

A couple of things that we took into consideration here, in case people have questions; we put a significant amount of work into this. One might say well, we look at the jury pool. When we look at the distance, there's a 25-kilometre radius around these courts for where these people must fall into this. So we're not going to have people above the age of 75 who have to drive a significant distance to do that. They're already out of it. These people are not expected – we are drawing from within that radius that's already there.

What I did do also is I wanted a jurisdictional scan done to show if that's what we're requesting here, where do we rank amongst the other provinces? Right now, Nova Scotia is actually at 70; New Brunswick is at 70; PEI and Quebec are 65; Ontario, there's no cap, none; Manitoba, 75; Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC, 65; the Territories and Nunavut, no limit; and the Yukon is 65.

Now, each province has their reasons for having these ages. This is an issue now that we've talked about over the last little while and it's obviously something that we feel is important now based on where we are right now at this time as it relates to our population and as it relates to our justice system and the needs that we have within.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, again, I'm looking forward – I don't think I have much else to say

as it relates to the amendment or the purpose of the amendment. I think it's quite self-explanatory. There might be a question as to why we have no cap at all, but there was a train of thought that again, (a), we can always come back to reassess this down the road, depending on need; and the second part is when you don't have a cap, to me, there is the possibility that you're going to have more challenges and then you have to do more examinations of whether a person should be granted the exemption or not.

Again when we talk about the age limit, even for judges in cases, in provincial court it's actually age 70, I believe. In the Supreme Court, it's age 75; I think I have that right. There a bunch of questions that could come out of that, but what I'll do is I'll leave it to the debate. I look forward to the commentary from my colleagues across the way and hopefully I'll do my best when we get to the – again, there may be questions asked during this stage, which I'll do my best to be prepared to answer them and obviously when we get to the Committee stage, I'll do my best to be able to answer those as well.

What I would say prior to sitting down, Mr. Speaker, is that this doesn't get done without the hard work of people within the department. There are a lot of policy analysts. We've reached out here. This work would have been involving people like Dan Chafe, the High Sheriff, people like Megan Collins who's in policy analysis, people down at the courts. This is something we've consulted around and I think it's a need and a necessity.

I want to thank those individuals for the work they've put into this. I think this is a necessary amendment going forward; it puts us still well within line within the rest of Canada. Given the statistics that I've put out there I think it's absolutely necessary that we do this.

On that note, I take my seat and thank you for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for the District of Topsail - Paradise.

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

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon, Bill 13. I'd just like to start my commentary by echoing what the minister just referenced in expressing his appreciation to staff. We all know that staff, quite often, work very, very hard behind the scenes to make things like this happen.

As well, they made a briefing available in the department. Officials made a briefing available to us for late last week. I wasn't able to attend but one of our staff did attend as well – so I thank them – and brought back and shared information on the basis for the bill, as much of what the minister just outlined himself.

Mr. Speaker, I've had some experience in my previous career with juries. Not a lot, to be honest, because there doesn't seem to have been many back in those days as there are today. When I was thinking about preparing to speak to this today I thought about the history of juries and how they all started because they go back quite a long time.

They actually go back to the Anglo-Saxon days of England when the Viking occupation was taking place in England. There was a Danish town in England, and was quite known, and had, over a period of time, what was known as principal officers. There were 12 of them who earned the right to be principal officers by their hereditary appointments, so it came down through the family. Then the history goes into the 12th century when Henry II as well, wanted to find a way other than being the decision maker – giving the order, making the decision and deciding the outcome.

In Canada today in our system of democracy, in our system right here in our own Legislature, as is mirrored in many respects based from the English system, we have three branches of government, as you would know, Mr. Speaker. We have a legislative branch, which is where we are here in our Legislature, where the government brings forward bills. They're debated, passed and then become the law of the land. We have the Executive Branch, which executes the policies that are determined here in the Legislature, and it's their job to run the

province and execute according to the law and the policies as passed here in the House.

And then we have the judicial branch, which when someone doesn't act or when a question of law or the conduct of someone or a difference of opinion occurs, then it's the judicial branch which is given the mandate and requirement to deal with such matters.

All three are intended and are supposed to operate completely independent of each other. So the judicial branch can't give direction to the Executive Branch on creating law – benefit at times for consultation and asking for their experience and so on, but they can't dictate. Executive Branch can't dictate to the judicial branch. And also the Executive Branch can't dictate to the House of Assembly or to the Speaker on decisions that would be made by the House of Assembly or how conduct occurs, or we can't be told what to debate or what we say, as long as we do so within the rules. So they're set up separately.

The jury process comes out of the judicial branch, obviously, where people have a right, as the minister referenced, to be tried and to be heard and a decision by a jury of their peers, as is quite often referenced.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that people in Canada, to serve on a jury, you don't need to have any legal background or expertise; you just need to be a citizen, as outlined by the minister during his commentary. There are exceptions to who can serve on juries; he's listed some of them. He's listed members, officers and employees of Parliament, or the Privy Council, the House of Assembly or Executive Council here in Newfoundland and Labrador. So you can't be a provincial Member of a legislature or a federal Member of Parliament – and I know the law here, the *Jury Act*, is a Newfoundland and Labrador law. So in this case in our province you can't be a Member of the House of Assembly.

You can't have Supreme Court and Provincial Court judges, court officials, sheriffs and sheriff's officers, barristers or solicitors. Members of police services cannot be jurors.

I don't know, Minister, maybe later, because it dawned on me earlier, I wonder if peace officers are permitted to be jurors or not, because they are a little bit different than police officers. Maybe the minister, if he recalls, he can mention in his closing, or we could ask about it in third reading. I'd be interested to know where that line draws because there are municipal enforcement officers now throughout our province more than ever before who have enforcement responsibilities. And there are others besides direct police who do different levels of law enforcement in our province as peace officers: officers or employees of the department of Justice, provincial or federal; the Solicitor General of Canada; wardens; correctional officers; employees of correctional institutions.

What's really interesting too, Mr. Speaker, is spouses of any of the ones just listed. It's interesting, because we know we have – in today's society, we respect independence of individuals more than we ever had before. A person can choose their spouse. Generally speaking, a person can't be confined from a responsibility or job or duty because of their spouse. There are some occasions, and this is one of them, where a spouse would be prohibited from acting as a juror of a spouse of any of the ones that are mentioned.

A person charged with an indictable offence is also an interesting one as well, mentioned by the minister. A person in our country is presumed, a presumption of innocence until proven guilty. That's an interesting one as well. I don't know if that ever comes up.

Then there are also exemptions. The minister mentioned another one I didn't have on my list. He talked about a person who is unable to speak or understand the language in which a jury trial is being held. I wasn't aware of that one, but that's the other one. Now, there are also exemptions to that. That may be applied for a person to serve on a jury in cases of hardship or serious hardship or loss to that person.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen it in the past where a person gets a summons for jury duty – we have it in Canada. Part of our citizenship is you have a civic duty to respond to a summons and to attend on a summons if you are so summonsed to be

part of a jury panel or to be potentially selected as a juror.

I've seen lots of cases where people have said: Well, I can't serve on a jury because I have a job or I have to care for someone or I don't have transportation. I've seen lots of people who have reasons they shouldn't. My experience has been that there's usually a fair amount of leniency in cases like that, but there are times as well when a person says: I can't serve on a jury because, and their request for an exemption is not acceptable.

There are persons providing sole care during the day for a child seven years of age who's not in school; a person who is infirm or aged; a person who is mentally incompetent; conflicts with the juror's pastoral or religious duties or beliefs; or language difficulties, which was mentioned by the minister, are all reasons to be exempted from jury duty.

The act also provides permanent exemptions, as the minister had referenced, and this is relative to the bill. Under clause 1, which deals with section 9 of the act, it repeals the current act and replaces it, as has been referenced by the minister.

"A person who is (a) 75 years of age or older;" – currently 65 – "(b) mentally or physically incapacitated; or (c) suffering from an illness which may reasonably" – on reasonable grounds – "be expected to be permanent shall, on application, be exempted permanently from serving as a juror."

In paragraph 2: "A person who applies for an exemption under paragraph (1)(a) shall provide proof of age satisfactory to the sheriff or the deputy sheriff." That's essentially what the change in the bill is. It's to increase the minimum age where a person can apply for a permanent exemption.

Mr. Speaker, I remember many years ago speaking to a judge, who's now deceased. We were talking about the history of trials and how they've become more complicated. I remember the conversation quite well. It was a Provincial Court judge; actually, he started as a magistrate and then became a Provincial Court judge as magistrates were phased out.

I remember him talking about early days in his law career and in his career as a judge. I think he was actually a judge before he became a lawyer, which used to happen in days gone by. A person could be appointed as a magistrate and then there was a period of time of transition and many of the magistrates went and obtained their law degree.

I remember the discussion and talking about how more complex trials had become. Some trials, which had been seen as the simplest, easiest, less complicated technical trials to take place, were becoming more complex and more difficult, more advanced, more creative in-depth challenges and legal challenges to some of the law in order for a defence lawyer defending persons accused of offences.

Of course, when that happens, the Crown has to become more elaborate, more extensive and do more work in the presentation of a case. If that's the case, then the police have a higher standard to follow as well. The rules have to be followed and be done more extensively. The investigations become more complex, prosecution becomes more complex and the defence becomes more complex. As that happens with jury trials, Mr. Speaker, it can create more challenges for people who serve on juries.

We heard earlier this year of a case in Toronto where a juror found that the exposure they received as a juror was very difficult for them. I think there was actually a diagnosis of PTSD or maybe an action. I was having a quick look for the case earlier. I couldn't find it. There were some articles in 2017 where jurors were finding challenges post trial where they were trying to shake off what they had been exposed to. Many people in society never expect or never trained or understand sometimes what they may be exposed through the most difficult cases –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

MR. P. DAVIS: – that may be heard through trials.

When I first read this and I saw the extension of the age from 65 to 75, the first thing I thought about is how much more difficult on an older generation it may be. I listened very carefully to the minister's comments today and I listened to the numbers that he talked about with the large number of jury trials that take place today, and the number of people who have been summoned in recent years to attend as a panel and chosen or had to participate in a jury.

To go back to my conversation with the former magistrate and Provincial Court judge, he talked about homicide trials could be done in a day or two days or three days at one point in time. Then they became a week and two weeks and six weeks. Now they can be months and months and months. It can be significantly taxing and challenging for a person to sit on a jury in a case like that.

In Canada, when an offence is punishable by five years or more, a person has a right to elect how they want to be tried. If there's an offence that's punishable by 10 years or 15 or 25 years, they can elect to be tried by a Provincial Court judge alone in some cases. Some automatically go forward. They can go to Supreme Court; judge without a jury or judge with a jury, depending on the severity of the offence and how it's outlined in law because there is a variety.

A person can elect to be heard by a judge and jury, and it's not unusual. Many will elect that because you can always change your position after and move it down, but my recollection is you can't move it up. So if you pick to be tried by a Provincial Court judge without a jury, you can't get into the process and decide now I want my jury trial. You can move them down rather than up. That sometimes happens and starts the process of needing people for a jury.

If you have some of those cases that happen today that can go on for months and months and can be full of technical evidence, can include photographs and videos and audio recordings, surveillance photographs and closed captioning TV cameras which exist in so many commercial spaces, and sometimes in open spaces and public spaces as well, all of that evidence can be presented or shared with a jury. I'm not surprised that we'll see some of those

circumstances, but I also understand the challenges of trying to have a pool of a sufficient number of jurors.

I don't know if it's still done, maybe the minister can comment on it. I don't know if it's still done or not, but years ago when you brought in – sometimes you bring in 60 or 100 or 150 people to a jury, now sometimes you bring in thousands, but you bring in several dozen people to sit as a jury. You try and find your jury, and if you didn't have enough the court could send a sheriff down on Water Street and say go bring in to me five people. The first five people you see, bring them into court and we'll review them to see if they can serve as a jury. If they couldn't get enough from that five, they might send them down to do more. Send them out the door – you go that way, you go that way and bring back people to me who are going to serve as a jury. We do have a civic responsibility. As citizens, we have a duty to serve as jurors. Sometimes that would happen as well.

As time goes on and cases get more complex, I can only imagine how more difficult it is – we've heard some of the stories and seen some of the media coverage on jury pools. I think there was one gathered at the Arts and Culture Centre some time ago because that was the only space large enough to bring the pool together.

Mr. Speaker, advancing the age is more in line with what we see in other provinces, while still including those exemptions, seems like a very reasonable approach to try and alleviate some of the challenges that our justice system has in trying to put together juries knowing that they are more complex, that there are more of them and that sometimes it's hard to find a pool of people to serve as that jury. It certainly seems reasonable to me.

I would ask the minister what consultation they've done with people of the seniors groups or what discussions they've had on that. If he mentioned it earlier, I apologize, I never caught it. I don't think he did, so I may ask about that when we get to Committee about any kind of consultation that may have been done, or if there's been any work done with health care providers about impacts and so on of that age group.

Other than that it just seems like a reasonable change to make in the *Jury Act*. Moving the requirement for satisfactory identification from what used to be in section 23 right up to this particular section, I think, is a proper and appropriate thing to do as well. It makes it clear. Hopefully, this will help to improve jury processes in the future.

I should say as well, I meet lots of people and have met lots of people over my lifetime who would love nothing more than to serve on a jury. They would love the opportunity to be called to sit on a jury. I say to them, yeah, you'd love it until you serve on a jury. But there are lots of people I know that would be intrigued and would like the opportunity to serve as a jury as their civic duties say we should and we have to, unless you meet the exemptions to say why you should not.

There are lots of people who have done it and there are people who have sat on juries who have enjoyed the experience as well. It's not all doom and gloom. I certainly don't want to leave that impression with anybody because there are people I know of who served on juries who said it was a great experience; they learned so much. It was difficult, it was challenging, they had an important task to do, but they enjoyed it.

I'd love to sometime have some insight inside the jury rooms in how they operate, but we don't get that privilege. What happens in the jury room is confidential and kept there. I respect that. I do know people who have said that they've enjoyed the experience as well. Serving on a jury can be rewarding to people and it depends on individuals, but it's important to do. Broadening the pool seems to me like a reasonable solution to benefit society because this is about society and a person's right to trial and a trial by a jury of their peers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'm very happy to stand to speak to Bill 13, the *Jury Act, 1991*. Basically, the point of this amendment to the *Jury Act*, as we know, as we've heard from my colleagues here in the House, is to expand the age of those who can seek a permanent exemption from serving on juries from 65 to 75. I don't know if that means now that 65 is the new 75 or 75 is the new 65, but something like that.

We know that people are very, very active in their 70s; very, very active in their 80s. I'll be curious to hear from the minister as to why this change is happening now. Is it because there is a shortage of people who willing to sit on a jury or where the request came from to actually change this age of exemption? I have no problem with it, but I am curious as to the origins of this and why now and who was requesting this.

We know that the jury process is so very important – one of the pillars in our justice system. I have never personally served on a jury. I know how difficult that would be because it really is about making decisions on people's lives and decisions that can affect people's lives in such a major way, but I am very grateful for those who are willing to serve on a jury.

Some people out of a sense of civic duty, some people out of an interest in the law, some people perhaps out of a sense of curiosity. I don't know anyone personally either who has served on a jury. I also realize that in some cases, particularly in cases where there has been murder or extreme abuse, how difficult that might be. Again, I'm very grateful for those who have been willing and continue to be willing to sit on a jury and to serve our justice system in that way.

In our criminal justice system, an accused person can choose to be tried by jury. That is a choice. Again, our jury duty is a very important part of our legal system. Supreme Court Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé called the jury the conscience of the community. And that's why it's so very important to be able to have a very diverse pool to be able to choose from when selecting a jury. She also wrote that it can act as the final bow work against oppressive laws or their enforcement. So it's not even just in a particular case.

I like that description of a role of a jury. Again, it shows how important it is, how important it is to our justice system, how important it is to our community and to our whole democratic system.

We know that juries are comprised of 12 people for criminal and six for civil cases – although civil cases by jury are very, very rare. People's names are drawn from the MCP list. So if you don't have an MCP card, with a valid, current address or phone number, you can't be called for jury duty.

Now, I can't remember – it was only recently, not so long ago, when we had to call a jury. When the sheriffs went out in downtown St. John's because there was a need for a jury and something happened and they didn't have enough people; they hauled people in off the street to say we need you to be part of this selection of people from which a jury would be called or selected.

That was kind of an interesting time, and I don't believe that was very long ago. I think that was in recent memory. Although, my recent memory isn't specifically recalling it, but I'm sure somebody here in the House might remember that. Maybe even my colleague here across the way.

People's names are drawn from the MCP list; they are drawn from a radius of 25 kilometres from the court where the trial is to be held, because it's really tough if you live much farther than that to be able to get back and forth. So it is not a secret that many do not want to serve on juries, as they can seriously interfere with a person's day-to-day life. Many will try to get an exemption, if possible, because for some people, some juries sit for a very long time.

The bill that we have before us here today appears to close the door to one of those exemptions for people who are looking for exemptions. Currently if you have reached the age of 65, you can ask for a permanent exemption from jury duty and now we have raised that to 75. That does not mean that somebody who's 75 can't sit on a jury. That does not mean if somebody is 95 they can't sit on a jury; however, it gives them the choice. It gives them the option.

Also, there are ways for people to have permanent exemptions. There are also ways for people to have exemption from a particular jury call. That is 10 per cent of the 6,050 people who've been chosen for jury duty where people had permanent exemption based on age, previously.

The statistic also indicates that by 2036, 30 per cent of the population in Newfoundland and Labrador will be over 65 years of age. Now, of course, that's true unless we change the issue of affordable child care, affordable housing so that we do grow our population. When we look at the issues of sustainable employment in our province, hopefully we'll be able to do that and then in fact 30 per cent of the population will not be over the age of 65 years of age. It could be that this amendment is to address the issue of our aging population in order to be able to expand the number of people who can be considered for jury.

I won't say much more than this, Mr. Speaker, but I am curious. I will be curious to hear from the minister as to why this, why now, who requested it. I'm sure he will have an answer to that. I have no reason to object to this bill and we will be supporting it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just take a couple of moments to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Jury Act.

I'm not going to be too repetitive, but, Mr. Speaker, we're lucky to be living in a democracy. Certainly, besides your right to choose who represents you, one of the pillars, I would suggest, of a democracy is rule of law. I think it's one of the things that separate countries like Canada from other countries perhaps that are not so desirable to live in, the fact that we have rule of law.

Sometimes the rule of law can be frustrating, no doubt about it. There are times that there are people who perhaps get charged with certain offences and they get off on technicalities and

stuff, and sometimes you scratch your head and say, my goodness, why did the law work that way? Why did someone only get such a minor sentence for an offence, or how could they have possibly gotten off because of such a minor technicality. It's built upon the system we have and it's created that way so that all citizens are treated fairly and equally and we can all have assurances that whether we're guilty or we're not guilty, that we all receive fair treatment.

Part of that system, of course, is the ability to be tried by your peers. It's not always the case. You can be tried by a judge. You can be tried by a jury. You can be tried by a judge and jury. What we're speaking to here particularly is the piece on a jury.

There are exemptions currently that people can apply for to be exempted from jury duty. If memory serves me – and perhaps the Member for Topsail - Paradise can confirm – if you're a police officer or something like that or someone in law enforcement, I think you can get exemptions, or you used to be able to at one point in time, from being on juries. It's an automatic exemption.

There are exemptions for medical reasons. There's a whole host of reasons why you could be –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: There you go. They went through the list.

There's a whole host of reasons why you can be exempted from jury duty. What's being proposed here, as has been said, is to change the age from 65 to 75 in terms of automatically being able to be exempted from jury duty.

I would sort of echo the comments of my colleague from St. John's Centre in terms of – just for information more than anything else, I'm curious as to why the change is being brought about now. I would assume it's because of the aging population, as has been referenced. I would assume it's probably because there's a lot more serious crime. I don't think anybody can argue with the fact.

Maybe the stats would prove me wrong, but it would seem to me there are a lot more high-profile cases and cases involving homicide that's happening in this province. I suspect it's related to drugs and organized crime and all those scourges that we've seen more and more in our province. Perhaps it came along with the oil wealth, I'm not sure, and people's incomes, but there's no doubt that drugs is definitely a big issue in this province and organized crime around those drugs. I think that's what's led to a lot of these serious crimes and homicides, serious assaults, armed robberies, all these types of things.

I would suspect, as a result of that, we have a greater need for juries than we had in the past. Combine that with the aging population, I can see where we could possibly have a problem in terms of getting jurors.

With that said, I really don't see a problem with what's being proposed here. Some people might think: My goodness, now we're going to take senior citizens who may be not well and everything, we're going to drag them out of their houses or out of the seniors home and stick them in juries. That's not the case, because under this revision it says 75 years old, but it also says: "mentally or physically incapacitated; or suffering from an illness which may reasonably be expected to be permanent."

If you're a senior and you have health issues, you can still be exempted. I think the point is that before someone could simply say: I'm 65 years old; therefore, I don't want to serve on a jury. That person may be of perfect health and fitness and wellness and everything else but they could just automatically be exempted by virtue of their age.

What we're saying now is the only way that can happen now is at 75. I think there are many, many people who are quite capable of serving on juries who are 65 or older. A lot of them probably got the time because, generally, they're retired and so on. So they probably have more time to do it than younger people who are working just to try to pay the bills and raise families and so on.

I don't see any issue with it. So I'll be supporting the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I'm happy to close debate on this. I appreciate the commentary from my colleagues on the other side. I appreciate what they had to say. I think we're all of the same mindset. I don't think there are any objections to the amendment we're putting forward. If anything, it's more sort of curiosity and questions as to the why and certain aspects.

I'll try my best to answer some of the questions that were put forward now, but if I don't cover them off, I can do my best during Committee to answer those.

I think one of the questions was: Why? The why is fairly simple. Just a few things I would suggest: (a) between 2013 and '17 we had five jury trials. This year alone, we have eight scheduled. The demand is going up.

The second part is we look at the population. When we look at those numbers I provided, we have the increase here. We have to increase that pool. The last part, I would suggest, is that the High Sheriff, when they do this they generally, depending on the complexity of the trial, will come up with a larger or a size of the pool based on the complexity of the trial. Some matters are more complex than others.

What I would say is that now more than ever, you look at trials, I think the Member referenced different trials. A number of years back you had on counsel on each side; now you have two counsels on each side. You have more scientific evidence and online – there's a greater depth, in many cases, to the evidence.

I'll never forget, perhaps one of the most famous trials, one that really brought the televised trial into this was – nothing to do with the Canadian system but when we first watched the OJ Simpson trial. It was really the advent of things

like DNA evidence, which you can imagine trying to explain that to juries, but we see that now, things like DNA are commonplace.

When we look at disclosure of information, one of the issues we have in our criminal trials now – not in our criminal trials, but the criminal justice system is the fact that disclosure, giving all the evidence out is a much more complex matter now. There's more of it. It takes longer to produce and we have to get it out in a more timely fashion. I would suggest that's the reason why.

One of the matters brought up is, in fact, the High Sheriff can do what they have to. In fact, there was one trial a few years back where they ran out and, in fact, the High Sheriff had to go to the mall. They went to the mall and pulled people out of the mall to have them ready for jury duty. That is very rare and unusual, of course. Again, that was before the time of current High Sheriff. In fact, now, I think there's more work than ever that goes into preparing a pool of possible, perspective jurors for each matter. They do a very good job of making sure it's ready.

In fact, we had one recently for a matter that you'll recall, they went outside the norm and had the Arts and Culture Centre ready because this is very lengthy, time consuming; we don't want people waiting out in the streets. In fact, we had one recently where they did have it down at the courthouse and they brought them in to make sure that the weather wouldn't affect them. They had a roof there. They provided food. The High Sheriff and his team go out of their way, realizing that it's a long and difficult but necessary process. They try to improve the comfort level. So I want to thank them for that.

One of the questions was the difference between police officers and peace officers. There are a couple exemptions. Police officers are exempted. Peace officers not specifically because, depending on the peace officer, (a), if they're an employee of Justice and Public Safety, they are exempted, but if it's municipal enforcement, no. There's no need because there's no relationship with criminal justice and criminal law and court, as there is with a police officer.

It's one of those things where you have to have that balance between wanting to have an exemption there for everybody but, at the same time, making sure that we cast the net as wide as possible and as fairly as possible. A lot of this depends on the complexity of matters.

When we talk about consultation, there was consultation with the High Sheriff and his team, who's responsible for this, but we also consulted with the Seniors' Advocate. The Seniors' Advocate was quite supportive of the step that we are taking.

I think you have some people that may be very interested in being able to provide this duty, if summoned, and would not want the age limit to get in the way. There are also some people that if that age limit is there and they have a different reason for exemption, there are grounds for which they can apply. But just putting that cut-off at 65 is not what we think is in the best interests of our system going forward.

On that note, I appreciate the support from the Members opposite. At this point, I look forward going into the Committee stage.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 13 be now read a second time?

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

This motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991. (Bill 13)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 13)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the *Jury Act*, Bill 13.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

The motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991." (Bill 13)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Chair, I can assure you this won't take very long, from my perspective anyway. I can't speak for anybody else. I mentioned during second reading debate, I wondered if the minister and his staff did any consultations with any groups, organizations or authorities knowledgeable in aging, and if there was any consultation done in changing the age from 65 to 75. I understand a jurisdictional scan took place, and I appreciate that. But I'm just curious if there were any consultations or discussions done to determine age appropriateness or any barriers, or impediments or considerations that may be made in changing the age.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

We did do consultations, as I mentioned. We consulted with the High Sheriff and we consulted with the Seniors' Advocate on the amendment that we're bringing forward. Looking at the jurisdictional scan, we can see that we're certainly in line with other provinces, but the Seniors' Advocate I can say – again, I would qualify her as an expert, given her background; it's something we debated here in the House. I would qualify here as an expert in aging. She was quite supportive of the move so it was good – again, it was something that was necessary and we needed to do but when you have that backing as well, it's certainly positive.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2 and 3.

CHAIR: Clauses 2 and 3.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 and 3 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 Jury Act, 1991.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, 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 and report Bill 13.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 13.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 13 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 13 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I would call from the Order Paper, from Orders of the Day, number 3, Concurrence Motion on the Government Services Committee.

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier in budget debate, I reported to this hon. House the Estimates of the Government Services Committee. You learn a lot of information through Estimates. The questions asked are the good questions and good answers given, which is sometimes contrary to what the other side of the House has to say, especially in Question Period.

The Government Services Committee is responsible for the Estimates of several different categories, and I'll run down through them briefly. The Consolidated Fund Services, Department of Finance, Executive Council, Public Service Commission, Service NL, Public Procurement Agency and the Department of Transportation and Works.

There was something a little bit different that was done this year, Mr. Speaker, and that is the Estimates of Executive Council. Now, in the past – well, since my time in this hon. House, the Estimates of Executive Council was usually done through Committee of the Whole, but this time it held its own session in Estimates.

Under the Executive Council we supplied the Estimates for the Women's Policy Office, the Human Resources Secretariat, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Intergovernmental Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Labrador Affairs Secretariat. The questions that came out, Mr. Speaker, were answered to the best of the ability of the ministers and the staff. These sessions are sometimes long, especially in the evening.

A big thank you to the minister and the department, his or her staff, that come forward and does the best to answer any questions. They actually do a good job in answering the

questions and, certainly, to the Members of the Government Services Committee themselves who took the time to sit through some of these sessions. Like I said, they are timely.

The one thing I want to talk a little bit about before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, is the questions that are asked and the answers that are given sometimes make their way back to Question Period, which is standard operating procedure. When I hear the Members opposite, especially the Member for Conception Bay South, stand up and say they asked a lot of questions but they don't get any answers, I sit through this hon. House during Question Period; I think in order to get an answer you probably have to listen for it.

The answers are there. I can see the Members are more concentrated on the next question rather than the answers and sometimes they get confused. I can understand where the answers are given quite clearly, but they're not received.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to point out that in order to get a question answered, you ask it but, more importantly, you listen. Somewhere in the midst of all your concentration you could very well find the answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: The other thing, the crowd across the way, the PCs, have a history of not being very good at math, Mr. Speaker. We've seen it when they were in government, and the Third Party has the same issues with math this year.

I just want to point out that on New Year's Eve there are a whole lot of traditions. Actually, one of the traditions I take part in is I like to go out and take my shotgun and ring off the new year with a few shots fired into the air. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure – and I stand corrected here – on the 31st of December the year changed to 2018. The crowd across the way, I'm sure they still think it is 2016 because they keep going back there.

The reason why they go back, Mr. Speaker, especially the Official Opposition, is they know where we went in 2016 because they caused it. They were the reason we went through very challenging times.

I think it was David Cochrane who probably made the best quote that best describes them: They're like the fox who broke into the chicken coop and ate all the chickens, now they're looking for the eggs. Mr. Speaker, that's how they work.

We've come a long way since 2016. It's two years ago now. They talk about going into 2016 with the \$2.7 billion deficit. The Premier did a wonderful job of telling them how they said it was \$1.1 billion, and that's more than double of what the reality is.

The first question the minister of Finance at the time had was: How are we going to do payroll? That's a tough question coming into a new government. Unfortunately, when you form government, you don't get to start with a clean slate. Even if you look ahead to 2022 or 2023, we'll still be doing damage control. We have nobody to thank except the crowd across the way.

When you look at how far we've progressed, I think the Minister of Finance said in his Budget Speech that when we come to the next budget we'll be under \$600 million. That's a far improvement from \$2.7 billion which the PC government left us with, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to realize that.

When you get up and condemn a budget that's had so many improvements – and what we're still doing is reacting to a deficit they caused, that they tried to hide from the people of the province. It shows a marked measurement when you go from \$2.7 billion in the red to just under \$600 million in the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, we're on track for a balanced budget in 2022-23. We've had to take the criticism along the way but the facts show for themselves that we're doing the job. We're getting the job done and it's no thanks to those across the way, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I'd just like to point out that the Estimates were conducted in a very good fashion, very few replacements, good questions were asked, good answers were given and it's a part of the process. Sometimes we cringe at going into Estimates, but we do go there, we get it done, we come back, report and look forward

to a bigger and a better budget in the coming years.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the Member for Torngat Mountains for that inspiring speech and the positivity he exuded indeed, yes. Some of the comments he talked about, he talked about economic indicators and talked about doing things better.

The things you see in this budget, expenditures are up by a little over 2 per cent. When you couple that with some of the economic indicators, it's caused some concern in regard to the overall plan that's laid out for '22-'23 and some of the strategic direction that's taken by this government in terms of getting back – or as they allegedly say getting back – to surplus at that particular time.

There's been some concern expressed in regard to that plan by the Auditor General last year, some of the bond rating agencies recently in regard to some of the initiatives that are in here. But we have seen in the last little while – and I think the gentleman before me spoke and talked about oil and some of the things we're seeing in regard to the price of a barrel of oil increasing.

We're seeing things happening around the world, just recently the Americans pulling out of the Iran nuclear agreement. People speculate that's driving it and will continue to drive it because the economic sanctions could look at less volume of oil coming out of countries like Iran and, therefore, driving the cost, as the amount that's on the market could be reduced.

That will continue to drive, I think, revenues for the province which, in and of itself, is good. Even though we had the Premier some time ago saying oil is not a policy and berated us at some time and some length about depending on oil. Success that will be retained, I think, or improvements in any financial position in this particular year, as we've seen in prior years, will be related to oil and related to oil markets, and

surplus over and above what's estimated by the barrel of oil and what's estimated in a particular budget. If so, that's good.

Our natural resources are a huge part of our economy – are today; oil and gas being no different. I think if you look at the seismic work and geological work that's been done off our coast and off Labrador, some speculate that not even 10 per cent has been tapped yet. We have huge potential off our coast and off our shore, a lot of potential long term in regard to driving the oil and gas sector and started in our time, as well, driving the support services for that industry and what importance that is. So not only did they develop here and they support the industry here and they employ people, but that gets exported. That's the intellectual knowledge that gets developed and gets exported around the world.

If you look at countries like Norway and what they've done in developing their oil fields, beginning in the early '70s, not only developed their oil fields but reaped the benefits from it, they also developed an inventory of expertise and companies all over the world. Some even work here now, work in our industry, and that's where Newfoundland certainly is working towards with some of our local companies.

Now, with that as well comes the ability to innovate, the research to be done. I know in our time we developed the Research & Development Corporation, which the current administration has basically gotten rid of; it's defunct. One of the main roles of that was working with the oil and gas sector and others, in particular, but certainly looking at through the Atlantic Accord, through the obligations of companies here involved in the oil and gas sector and the operators, the requirements and monitoring through the C-NLOPB to be directed to a part of that revenue and royalties to be directed to things like education, things like research and development, things like innovation, new technology directed at the industry. Applied technology is important as well because that looks at immediate returns to the industry and to us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and to government through royalty regimes.

I remember back – there was a research chair that was appointed at Memorial, through work

with the RDC and with the various partners of, I believe it was, Hibernia. That research chair was looking at particular – I'm not sure what the exact name was, but looking at how you extract greater oil content from a seabed and in the earth where that volume of oil is stored and how you extract more of that. That technology was developed, improved and enhanced.

As they get down prior to that, down to extracting so much of that oil, they got to a level where there was a high water content and they couldn't extract any more. Through that innovation and new technology, they were able to extract a greater amount from that oil field, so that benefits all concerned. Obviously, you're developing new technology that can be used elsewhere, can be used off our shore or used anywhere else around the world. It looks at greater royalties because we're taking greater oil from that oil field and it's a greater return to the province.

So those are the things, in terms of research and development, that are important and certainly helps the industry as it grows, which is required and continues to be required. Now, I know there's InnovateNL, which the current administration brought in. One of the main issues we had tried to improve on was the amount of money that's been leveraged from the private sector.

When it started out first, initially, it was a high public percentage content that was used. That has grown to the point of over 50 per cent where new dollars coming in were private sector dollars that were being leveraged for that applied research, and that's where you want to get. You want to be able to extract that private sector dollar to drive opportunity and drive that R & D.

I know at Memorial as well and the Marine Institute, a lot of work went into helping with that research; state-of-the-art facilities at the Marine Institute that are often used by the various oil companies in terms of research they're doing, testing of equipment and all kinds of things.

So the research that's going on – and as we certainly supported in our time and invested a lot in it – to build that basis to partner with industry, academia and R & D, that's where you get a

return back in new technologies for various industries.

We went through Estimates and had discussions on various parts of Natural Resources. One was – and we brought it up and discussed – the \$20 million that was discussed that Nalcor was asked to come up with, I guess, through various reductions in their expenditures for their 2018 budget.

Curiously enough, on budget day there was a Minute of Council – I'm not sure whether it was an OC – that was issued directing government to send back \$20 million to Nalcor. We had asked in Estimates and we asked the Minister of Natural Resources, as well as the Minister of Finance, what particularly happened there. Was there a direction to them to cut \$20 million? It was cut from a seismic program, which is kind of unique when you think about it because government had come out with *Advance 2030* in regard to the oil and gas sector and how you're going to grow the industry. I think it was projected maybe 100 new exploratory wells and different activity, which is all quite positive. We certainly recognize that. That's what you need. Exploration is key because that starts the process.

The seismic work and the investment, we started at our time in government, that's been continued on, which is key as well because that provides data when you go to land sales off our coast to entice companies to have some basic information on what actually is there. We can provide that. That allows them as well to make some decisions on where they want to invest, how they want to invest.

From our perspective, as well, through the public entity of Nalcor, we have some understanding of what's there as well. We're not going into it blindly in terms of putting up land sales. We also have some knowledge and technical data of what really exists before we put those land sales.

So all of that is very important, but interestingly enough, in this budget, our understanding was that we were told the board of directors or the CEO of Nalcor – we're not sure who – cut \$20 million from this program. Even though *Advance 2030* was announced by the current

administration which needed seismic and exploratory work to continue what the directives and strategic direction was of that document. Yet, that \$20 million, I guess the CEO of Nalcor or someone over there decided they were going to take \$20 million out of probably one of the most – one of many important, but certainly an important program for that corporate entity. Then it was put back at some other point at some time after the fact.

We're not sure why. We asked questions on it. We got mixed reviews in regard to where that's coming from. Obviously, they didn't save \$20 million because they reduced it and then government sent them over \$20 million. So, actually, it looks like they made \$20 million during the process that was invested in them. When we asked where this was going to be made up there were questions and answers given to us, well, it could be, we'll see how the revenue is going and what they're producing, that kind of thing and we'll see how that goes but not very definitive on what actually transpired there. We may get some further details on that as we move ahead in discussions here, but we certainly asked questions on it here in the House as well.

Another issue that came up, not in Estimates – I'm not sure if we had discussion on it again – and we asked the questions here in the House in regard to water availability related to natural resources. Some of the challenges last fall we were hearing in various areas of the province where Hydro has generating capacity was water levels, and some of the issues related to almost 40-year lows in regard to hydrology and some of the data that was available. What that was meaning for hydro development at that time and as well leading into the winter and into the spring.

We were told at that time there was some recognition of it, everything seemed fine. Just recently, I spoke to some people about Hinds Lake, 75 megawatts, and some of the challenges they're having there in regard to low water level; Cat Arm as well, in regard to reduction in water capacity. All that ties in to, obviously, if the water is not available it can't flow through those generators and produce the electricity that's required. Some concern in that, in regard to the overall capacity.

We are, based on the line the Maritime Link, bringing in the power to offset what it cost to burn – actually, I think it's bunker C oil at Holyrood and what that actually means in terms of reduction of costs. If we can bring it in at a cheaper price than what it is to run that facility, obviously that's a positive and provides less cost to the consumer in regard to expenditures we have to make in bringing that power in.

As well, related to Holyrood, we've also asked questions – I think it was in the Finance Estimates and, as well, in Natural Resources. We asked about the carbon tax related to what's being proposed by the federal government. The way the federal government had it arranged I guess, or the directive they give to the provinces is you had your homemade type of carbon tax that you had to develop, or if not they'll implement it. The big hand from Ottawa will come down and say this is what you're going to do. That has to be in place for the final quarter of this fiscal year.

Why I relate it to Holyrood and Come By Chance, it's related to the emissions coming from that particular facility and what that means. Obviously, if you had a \$10-a-ton carbon tax that's initiated in the first quarter of 2019, and over the next number of years I think it goes to \$50-a-ton carbon tax, it's a significant cost that needs to be paid for that. That's not in a general sense in terms of transportation emissions that you might pay on gasoline that's then trickled down to all elements of society, which I'll come back to, but that's just doing with the facility there in Holyrood and what that costs to people.

We asked, has there been any allocations made – we asked the Finance Minister – for the final quarter in this fiscal year, which will be the first quarter in 2019? Again, no indication that there's been any accommodation, any look at if Nalcor is going to pay that, who pays that and what the cost would be.

My colleague, who's the environmental critic, has talked here and asked in the House about the carbon tax. A great question is – the average family in the province today with two kids, looking at their purchasing power, and goods and services they need with at least a \$10 carbon tax coming in per ton and that trickles down

through the economy. What's that average family going to pay? What's the extra cost?

We hear across the way there are no new taxes. It's status quo. Well, the 300 taxes that were increased and new ones added in 2016, this carbon tax is coming and it's going to be part of that and it's going to be significant.

We asked, and my colleague asked to the minister, and maybe a couple of ministers: What's the effect going to be on that family in Newfoundland and Labrador? Again, we have no answers on that. There are no details.

There's been a report done by the parliamentary officer just recently that talks about the tremendous increase and effect on GDP that the carbon tax is going to bring if you look at rolling it out to '22-'23, and the cost that's going to be passed down to Canadians, and certainly Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and what it means for income, and for cutting into disposable income that's in people's pockets.

Something like that too, it's not just – it's the whole economy that feels it. It's municipalities that have costs. It's small companies; large companies. It's goods and services. It's the retail sector. It's everybody that feels that, because that's going to be passed on. It's important that we have some information on it, but to date we have none. Who's going to pay it and what it's going to look like, there's no idea.

When you look at the taxes I talked about and the fees, what's that doing for the economy. Look in the government's own documents, *Economic Outlook 2018*, which is in the budget documents, and look at the indicators and what the projections are, they're all pretty well going in the wrong direction. Because we need to talk about investment, we need to talk about creating an environment where small businesses want to operate.

If we look at the current cannabis issue that's gone on lately in regard to producers; we have Canopy Growth that was given an opportunity to come here and basically create a monopoly and in the process get over \$40 million worth of remittances towards that. As well, I understand they have the ability – actually, guaranteed four retail sites, I think it is, that they can use to

distribute as a producer that cannabis, which discourages local entrepreneurs, local small businesses to do that.

There was suddenly a concern – I had two individuals in my district who contacted me about getting involved. We got them hooked up with Health Canada in regard to applying for the actual licence. The cost, and based on the return of 8 per cent, which the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation, I guess directed by the current government, is allocating, there were huge issues in making it profitable, the amount of product that would need to be sold and those types of things.

We've also seen some very large corporations that have been given the ability to sell cannabis. It goes against the small employer, new entrepreneur, if someone want to enter in to build right here, and really keep the money here in the province. Certainly, at this time we'd want to support business and economic activity that see new dollars generated, but those dollars stay here in the province and not exited to other large corporations outside of the province. There's been a lot of discussion about that and we'll see where it goes.

We even had some national discussion these days about whether the target's going to be hit for the legalization of cannabis; but, whatever the case, it's important that we give every opportunity for entrepreneurs, for small business, to be part of this economic activity. As a way forward you would want that, so it's difficult to see why an exclusive monopoly would be set up for producers and remittances of \$40 million given to just one company.

If someone else comes in, do they get those same benefits? Where does it end in terms of going down that road and how many gets it? Once you get that monopoly established, the real concern is that once it's there it's operational, you have those controls, you've got the volume and you have the amount of production. It develops and entrenches that monopoly which will inhibit new companies from operating, setting up and being part of the economic opportunity that exists.

As we know, small business, everybody heard the statistics. Up to 90 to 95 per cent just in

Canada and in Newfoundland and Labrador is small business. That's hiring one, two, three, four people, making a livelihood for people in a community.

I just heard today, I spoke to the owners of the Trepassey inn. They've attracted people to come work. They've made tremendous investment to take advantage of the region. Based on staff they've hired just in the past year, they've seen anywhere from four, five or six new kids come in and attend the school. That's enormous for that area because they've seen tremendous reductions in the past number of years.

Their school is going from probably K to 12, 28 kids, probably up to 36 or 37. It may be a small number but it's huge. It shows the benefit of economic opportunity in advancing and recognizing that something like Mistaken Point, small business and driving economic activity and sustainability. It's a great example of that.

I certainly applaud those entrepreneurs and all the people in the area, non-profit groups that have helped in terms of driving economic activity and wanting to dig in and make a difference. That's really important for here. It's great to see. I'd like to hear further debate as we go forward in the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to stand and speak to Concurrence on these matters with relation to the budget of this year, Mr. Speaker. I do want to wish congratulations to my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island, the new leader of the Official Opposition. I congratulate him on his role and wish the Member for Topsail - Paradise all the very best in his future endeavours. I certainly wish my colleague from St. John's Centre well in her new role as well.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to wish special greetings to my colleague from the District of Exploits. It's his birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: I certainly say happy birthday; nifty-nifty, plus some, I believe. Anyway, I won't digress.

Every time you have an opportunity to stand here in this Legislature, it is indeed an honour and a privilege to speak on behalf of those who have elected us.

Last week, as those who are listening at home would know, we were not sitting in these chairs last week. We were spread across the province in our districts. It was constituency week. Mr. Speaker, I have to say it was a welcome time back in the district, engaging with constituents, getting meeting done throughout the district. I believe I went up and down the Burin Peninsula Highway eight times, trekking back and forth to different events.

I had six graduations. I spent some time with the Member for Bonavista in Trinity at the Regional Heritage Fair where I was so delighted to present the overall winner of the entire fair with his certificate and award. He was from Tricentia Academy in Arnold's Cove, William Martin. He did a project on the Battle of the Boyne, a very interesting project.

As a student of history myself, it was something that was unacquainted with. I encourage Members to look it up. Apparently, it is something that happened quite some time ago and decided the fate of this Island, whether we would be French or English.

I also had the pleasure at the fair to present the certificates and awards to the best project in the World War I category to Hannah Bannister of Come By Chance, who did a project on the role of women in the First World War. She will now be travelling with the Royal Canadian Legion and fellow students from across the province to France and Belgium for the July 1st Trail of the Caribou trip. I certainly wish them all the best.

I thank the Member for Bonavista for the fine hospitality in his district in Trinity and the Rising Tide Theatre, on the cusp of celebrating a big anniversary for them. I'm sure I will be back to celebrate with them, but Rising Tide has certainly become a cultural icon on the Bonavista Peninsula and we recognize that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to discuss and take my time today to talk about innovation. This is Innovation Week. I have the great honour of being the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, but I also enjoy my role as the parliamentary secretary for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

As of late, our department's focus has been squarely put on innovation, on technology, on the many facets of the innovation sector to grow this sector, to grow jobs, to grow economic activity. Just this morning, the Premier and I and the minister and the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, visited Quorum data solutions on the former Little Dale campus. They have 89 permanent employees. They develop software for car dealerships and that's being done right here in St. John's.

Just a few months ago, we hosted the first ever technology industry summit. We've also hosted the Agriculture Industry Summit, the aquaculture industry summit and what we're hearing from the industry groups is that they've never, never seen the kind of level of engagement the departments are making with these industries, not only talking, Mr. Speaker, not only engaging, but focusing on result-oriented plans with specific action-oriented items that can be followed up and tracked and progress can be reported.

We hosted one of those at Verafin for the technology sector. For those who are unacquainted with Verafin, they do online banking security also right here in St. John's. There's so much happening right underneath our noses that oftentimes Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we may not recognize that. We obviously know ourselves to be peoples of the sea, we know ourselves to be an oil-faring province as well, Mr. Speaker, but technology is on the rise – technology is on the rise.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BROWNE: I'm getting to mining, Mr. Speaker.

We were also visiting recently Empowered Homes. They've developed a software application, a thermostat called Mysa that you can monitor and control your temperatures in each room from your phone, Mr. Speaker. You

can set it for when you're on vacation and when your flight will land, you anticipate returning home to a pre-set temperature. This was started by two young brothers – they're in their early 20s – from their parent's basement. Now they have an office downtown. They have a number of employees; I believe it's 11 employees that they have.

The technology jobs in this province, they're better-than-average pay, they're highly specialized and skilled and it's keeping young people right here at home, Mr. Speaker. I have a great interest in expanding the technology sector and expanding our knowledge resource pool here in the province.

It's not only software development, Mr. Speaker, where innovation is at play. When we look at Anaconda Mining in the Baie Verte Peninsula, in the mining sector we're seeing great, innovative strides being made. Recently InnovateNL made a financial commitment to Anaconda and they are doing great things on the Baie Verte Peninsula, which I'm sure the Deputy Speaker can inform that House on, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly don't want to give the impression that it's all software and computers, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of innovation happening across the province. These are just some of the investments we've made recently.

Last summer we made a decision that we wanted to shine the light on innovation in a very focused and laser-targeted way, Mr. Speaker, and we created InnovateNL. InnovateNL is designed for kind of one-stop shopping. An ability to reduce red tape, to bring synergies together within the department and ensure the money that is being expended in the name of innovation in this province is going directly into research and development and into private sector investment.

The former Research & Development Corporation, by remodelling the model that we are using now in InnovateNL, that saved government \$3 million, Mr. Speaker. By making that change and creating InnovateNL, not only were we making government more administratively efficient, but we were freeing up more dollars for innovation. That's critical, because what we hear from in the technology

sector particularly, the biggest challenge they face is talent recruitment and retention. The more that we can put into programs and the more that we can partner with the private sector to help them achieve their goals, the more successful we will be.

This ties in of course, Mr. Speaker, with the Business Innovation Agenda that we launched. The superclusters are something else I want to discuss because I don't think it's something that we talk enough about. There were five superclusters announced by the federal government across the country. The private sector stepped up. They formed their own partnership. They're putting their own money on the table and the federal government is then matching that.

The supercluster for Atlantic Canada – we all worked together as four provinces and with four private sector communities in each respective province – is for oceans.

Just yesterday, at the launch of Innovation Week at Memorial University, the parliamentary secretary to Minister Bains was in town for the launch. He commented in his remarks, Mr. Speaker, how fitting and perfect the Ocean Supercluster was in a way that wasn't the case for the other four across the country. Each had their own merits I'm certain, but the natural synergies that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador, in the other three Atlantic provinces when it comes to oceans, is phenomenal.

We see so much activity occurring in Holyrood, Mr. Speaker, in the District of Harbour Main. The Member has been such a fervent advocate for that. We've had so many announcements out there as well with the Marine Institute and other entities. There is so much happening, Mr. Speaker, with the Ocean Supercluster.

We also have to bear in mind when we look at the economic prospects for the province – I've mentioned that we've hosted industry summits for agriculture, for aquaculture, something the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, I'm certain, can tell us of the benefits of aquaculture. I had the benefit of travelling that area for quite some time when I worked for the former MP there.

There's so much economic rejuvenation that has occurred in the Coast of Bays region as a result of aquaculture. The people of my district and the people on the Burin Peninsula and the Placentia Bay region are hoping to see some of those same results.

We've also, as I mentioned, had the technology sector industry summit but we've also launched *Advance 2030*. The Minister of Natural Resources has done a fine job, Mr. Speaker, a fine job. I have to commend the minister, such a fine minister and a capable hand at the wheel of Natural Resources. *Advance 2030* seeks to double our oil production by 2030 amongst other things.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, that we set goals. It's important that we set benchmarks so we can set sail on where it is we want to go. We have such opportunities in the oil and gas sector. We have such opportunities there that we will continue to pursue because we must continue to pursue them.

Equally important, Mr. Speaker, we have taken note – and since forming government in 2015, we have made a concerted effort through the Cabinet Committee on Jobs that the Premier formed to ensure that all sectors are being looked at adequately and sufficiently to determine what supports can be made by government to the industry in partnership with them. That is what's so important, Mr. Speaker. That's what's so important, is partnering with them. It's not merely releasing a plan from the bellows of Confederation Building for the industry; it's working with them in partnership in the communities and the industry and ensuring that we get that right.

I also want to mention, Mr. Speaker, our department has so many economic facets to it. Tourism last year saw record non-resident and resident spending, over \$1.1 billion as we work to get that up to \$1.6 billion. We're getting there, Mr. Speaker. We had 575,000 non-resident visitors come here for the first time last year, generating \$553 million worth of new money into the economy. It is phenomenal. We've seen employment rise from 18,000 people to 20,000 people in the tourism industry. It is phenomenal.

While I was in Trinity last week, Mr. Speaker, attending the regional heritage fair, it was amazing to see the number of start-ups and businesses in that area surrounding tourism. I had an opportunity to drop by the Port Rexton Brewery. There are a whole host of opportunities there. One draws from the other. You start one and another pops up next to it. They build on each other's successes.

I think one of the beauties, Mr. Speaker, if I will, of the tourism industry is that people are really pulling together. People know that my success is your success. It's not so much competing against one another as it is a high tide floats all boats.

I also noticed in Trinity East there's a new spa going up. People are making investments; they recognize what's happening in the economy. These are all positive things.

When we look at that area, I just think back to *Maudie*, the film that had much of its filming done on the Bonavista Peninsula, Mr. Speaker. That film alone generated \$400,000 worth of taxes back to the province. It generated a \$9 million total economic output. You can't buy that kind of economic activity. It's strategic investments through our Film Development Corporation that allow for this type of investment here. *Maudie* is a terrific example on the Bonavista Peninsula; it did a lot of filming there. We're very hopeful and very optimistic that more production work will be done here in the province and also for post-production work that can be done here in the future.

I also want to touch on, before I sit down, mental health. Mental health is something that – you can have all the economic foundations, Mr. Speaker, that you wish, but without good physical and mental health, it is hard to enjoy what investments are around you and the jobs that are created as a result of it.

I have to commend the Minister of Health and Community Services, my good friend, who has impeccable driving. I have to say, he has driven his department in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, in a way that focuses on mental health finally as a substantive policy issue for government to tackle. How proud I was to be there at the announcement for the replacement of the Waterford, for a new mental-health facility

that will no longer be called the Waterford. It's a facility that has been long sought after and something that we have committed to do.

I look no further than the Burin Peninsula – and the Member for Burin - Grand Bank can certainly attest to this, Mr. Speaker – the Roots of Hope initiative, the first in Canada that has taken place on the Burin Peninsula. When I came into office the wait-lists were at 70, 75, 80, even up to 100 to get in to see a mental health counsellor in the Marystown Eastern Health clinic. Today that number is at zero. There is no wait-list anymore. Strategic investments and partnering with community has gotten people better services. We see that. I see that. I talk to people. I know that people are feeling better about themselves. God willing, they will seek the services that they need.

I know the challenges of mental health, Mr. Speaker. My uncle died by suicide. I understand the impacts it has on a family. The questions that are lingering: Why? What could we have done differently? Did we know? Did we see the signs? Those are questions that are difficult, questions to which you never get the answers. All you can do is pledge to fight another day and try to help others from getting in that situation.

I will never forget that day in 2005, Mr. Speaker. Many families on the Burin Peninsula have experienced that type of day. When we see wait-lists going from 175 down to zero, I can tell you it makes the role that you play and the reasons why you sought political office worthwhile. I can tell you sometimes it doesn't require a large investment, sometimes it is about changing how you're doing things. I commend the Minister of Health and Community Services and I commend Eastern Health for having an open mind on how we deal with mental health issues in my region and across the province.

We also saw the implementation of the secure withdrawal legislation for youth, Mr. Speaker. We saw the implementation of the prescription drug monitoring act. Many concrete steps have been taken to address mental health issues.

Although we will always continue working on the economic files like the Marystown Shipyard, which is something that I continue to work on – I had conversations with the relevant parties as

recently as yesterday on that file. I'm very hopeful that we're going to have some good news on that soon. I'm very hopeful that we're going to have news on the Grieg project, Mr. Speaker, very soon. I'm a fervent supporter. I know where I stand. I can't speak for Members of the Opposition. I can't speak for them. I hope that they will stand with the people of the Burin Peninsula and the Placentia Bay region to support jobs and the prospect for greater economic activity.

I can tell you with all my heart, Mr. Speaker, I care very deeply for the region I represent. I care very deeply for their economic needs, for their social needs. I take great pride and pleasure in working with the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's and the Member for Terra Nova, who are all neighbours of mine in various regions of the district, in working together and collaborating to ensure that we have the strongest basis for success in the future.

I have a Premier whose door has always been open, who works and supports us to ensure the people of our district are well represented, and my colleagues who sit in Cabinet are always there to support the initiatives that the people of the province feel are important. It's not to say that we are always correct or always quick enough to address a solution, but I can tell you, we always have the best of intentions at heart and we'll continue working for the people of this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me pleasure once again to rise and speak to Concurrence. I guess the first thing I have to address is the transfer of funds from the department in the administration of agriculture to Transportation and Works in reference to agricultural road construction.

One of the biggest issues to the development of the 64,000 acres – which again, for the record,

has always been on this Island and has always been there, so it's not something new that this administration has brought up – is the access to the 64,000 acres.

Many of these parcels or areas of interest are in extremely remote locations. There's over a half a million dollars of provincial funds that have been moved from the department of agriculture again to Transportation and Works, and I'm really concerned that there will be an active communication between the two departments that won't hamper the development of this agricultural resource.

As I said, many of these prime pieces of agricultural land, which could add to our food supply, are in remote locations. Even the construction of the access roads is going to take a considerable amount of time and an extraordinary amount of funds.

We really need to prioritize which area this funding is going to be spent on. The tendering process for the road construction is another issue in itself. My fear is that there will not be sufficient time within the agricultural program to identify, engineer, tender and construct these roads that are now the responsibility of Transportation and Works.

My suggestion would be to bring the funds back to agriculture. They were doing a great job of administering the roads and the access funds and now, all of a sudden, we have to deal with a different department. Trying to make things efficient, it's almost as if it's been made more complicated for the developers being the producers.

Another thing I would like to speak to is the energy audit. I would like to see Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation conduct an energy audit on all of its units. Prioritize the renovations versus the benefit of savings on a priority list and put an active plan in place based on where we can save the most energy. Not only would it reduce the cost of operating these units, it would also do a great favour to our environment and reduce our impact of carbon production in the form of heat or electricity, whatever it may be, on our fragile planet.

Energy audits should also be carried out on all our public buildings. Maybe we could even look at our suppliers having to have an energy audit on their business or their facilities as part of a tendering prerequisite. It will go a long ways to making more power, more energy available to business development and industry expansion, but the biggest benefactor would be the impact of our existence on the environment.

Another issue that I'd like to speak to is the legalization of cannabis. I've kind of really listened to it because the production of any plant interests a farmer. I'm not happy, nor comfortable, with the way that we have chosen Canopy international. There was no competitive process. Unlike other jurisdictions, which had a competitive process in which they had numerous interested parties to bid on the supply, we chose one and we gave them an advantage over everybody else. That's not industry creation, that's monopoly creation.

The same thing goes on down to the retail outlets. For the life of me, I can't understand why there's a concentration of outlets in the CBS area while there are none in the Northern Peninsula. There are none, to the best of my knowledge, down on the Burin Peninsula. I think that's not only partially government's responsibility to see that we are geographically dispersed, the retail outlets, but I think that's what the intent is to – not to control, but in the legalization process we want to be able to provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with a safe supply of this recreational material.

By dislocating it so far away from areas such as the Burin Peninsula, the Great Northern Peninsula and parts of Labrador, I think we're only actually going to encourage more black market sales. Because as others are using this as a recreational material, all parts of our province are going to want to do the same and have the same opportunity. Just like any business people, the illegitimate portion of the world, they're going to recognize the business opportunity and they're going to concentrate their sales efforts in those areas that people cannot get legalized material from legalized retail outlets. I really think that was the second misstep.

Another part of it is we don't have the legal ramifications of the legalization of cannabis

figured out when it comes to workplace health and safety. In my other career as a farmer, I have a big concern with anybody who may be under the influence of recreational cannabis.

Agriculture is actually the most dangerous – well, not most dangerous, but most likely industry to incur an injury in Canada. We're using machinery every day, we are around animals, we work long hours. There's a lot of responsibility. Judgment can in no way be impaired by anything and not compromise the safety of one's self or people around you. That's going to stem out to other industries, such as the construction industry, transportation industries.

We'll be able to arrest people. There's no doubt that a peace officer will be able to go up and arrest somebody, but when it comes right now to actually charging and administering punitive measures, it's just going to be a legal nightmare for the courts. There's going to be so much, I guess, interpretative evidence that is going to be subject to interpretation by juries, by judges, by lawyers and it's just going to plug up our system.

I know we say we're being force fed the legalization of cannabis, but, as I've said before, we are still ultimately responsible for the safety of our people. We, as a province, we, as a Legislature, have been elected to maintain that responsibility and ensure the safety of our people. I don't think we're in a position, anywhere near in a position to do that yet, and by no means should we be allowing the federal government to force feed us and impose a date of legalization. I think that's just not a – there's no way I can argue with myself to make that a reasonable ground to say that we have to do it. We'll do it when we're comfortable. That's what we have to say, when we can guarantee the safety of the people.

I am hearing a lot of excitement about the technology sector, and by no means am I a detractor of that because the technology sector does provide opportunity for industry development and economic activity and income, but the reality is that's based on people. Given the rate of our province's outmigration, for different reasons; one of them being our taxation system is probably gone from the most favourable to one of the least favourable in the country.

Our cost of living here, between the increased fees, the infamous levy, the taxes on basic items such as insurance which are a must to conduct any sort of activity. I know we've talked about reducing it in two years' time, but it's only by 2 per cent, and given the fact that inflation will continue to rise, that 2 per cent will not be noticed on the bottom line or on the amount of money that people of Newfoundland and Labrador have in their pocket.

Yes, the technology sector does provide huge opportunity, but, as I said, we need people to participate in that technology sector. If there's another jurisdiction throughout this whole entire beautiful planet, they will move there and they can set up the exact same technology sector there. In order for us to develop the technology sector, we have to make this province a more affordable place to live, a better place to live. Then we can look at encouraging the technology sector.

If we throw money into the technology sector now – we've seen this in the past, in other previous administrations, where there was subsidization given to call centres which are basically similar to technology sectors. Those call centres are no longer here. Yes, they do depend on people. They have a different output but they're still people. Once that government funding dried up, those companies went elsewhere where it was more favourable for them to set up. That's the glory of being a movable species.

When we talk about unemployment numbers, I just did some quick calculations. Given that the majority of the people who left this province in the past couple of years and the people who are projected to leave in future years because of lack of employment opportunities, our real unemployment rate will be about 24 per cent. While it's only 13 per cent now, if you look at just as many people who are unemployed that are living here in this province are now going to leave the province, our unemployment rate is technically double what it really is. That's a big concern, because some of the most mobile people in this province are the most educated or the most skilled. They're the ones who have the most mobility. That's going to further create a deficit of opportunity here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

When we are counting on the doubling of oil production, yes, I would love to say we're going to double oil production, but that is entirely dependent on world markets. As we've seen in the past decade or so, there's an increased walk away from oil consumption; better technology, better efficiencies.

The United States to the south of us, they're actually now a net exporter of petroleum products, whereas they were always an importer. Doubling oil production, yes, it's a lottery if it happens. Yes, it's a lottery if we can capitalize on that, but I think there are better things we can invest our time and money in; more sustainable industries, more sustainable ideas and more sustainable concepts, environmentally and socially, for the people of our province.

In reference to WHSCC – I think I got that right – I kind of had a second thought on the increase of benefits. The increase of benefits is only permitted because of overpayment by the employers. This overpayment and this surplus that currently exists in that account is quickly being eaten up by these increased benefits.

There's no doubt that our injured workers need to be taken care of, but when this surplus is eaten up, what is going to happen? Is government going to step in and compensate for the increased demand? Or is government going to go back to the employers and say, unfortunately, in order to maintain a self-supporting corporation we have to take more money out of your pockets. We have to take more money out of employers' pockets.

So, not only will that compromise the financial ability of an enterprise, it will compromise our ability as a province to encourage businesses to come in and set up in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's something that needs to be addressed. That's something that needs to be addressed before we get into that situation, that we are in a deficit process and it falls on the backs of employers. Employers are stressed enough as it is between the depressed economy, increased costs of doing business –

AN HON. MEMBER: Muskrat Falls.

MR. LESTER: Muskrat Falls is a great concept in principle, and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LESTER: I know everybody laughs at that. It is a great concept in principle because I think everybody really appreciates being able to turn on their light switch no matter what time of year it is. The reality is, we as a province have been devoid of infrastructure upgrades and improvement in the past 40 years and now it's time to do that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) got hoodwinked.

MR. LESTER: Hoodwinked? I can go back to a hoodwinked concept. I think the most common one I hear that on is the financial position of the province, but do you know what? I'm actually tired of hearing that, and I'm pretty sure everybody I talk to on the street and everybody you talk to on the street is tired of hearing: you did not know. Everybody in this province knew.

With that, as my time winds down, I'll go back to my favourite subject, and that's food production. I would like to see more, as I said in the past, more food production at home. That means more food production in community gardens, more food production in people's backyards.

There should be language and parameters put within our housing units that if someone does want to start a garden there should be infrastructure in place such as tillers, sheds, encouragement by staff that would enable people who are tenants of our publicly-funded housing, to enable them to get out, get active, produce some of their own food, take pride in their neighbourhoods. All those things there would go so far to improve everybody's social perception and everybody's confidence levels.

As our population does age, we are going to see an increased need for better quality food, more activity and increased needs in the subsidized housing market largely put forth by our own government. Gardening is an amazing thing. It does wonderful things for the soul, wonderful things for the body and wonderful things for the community spirit. That's something I really feel strongly about.

I'm looking at Members opposite; I can see lots of green thumbs over there by the way they're acknowledging what I'm saying. In your off time, I'd encourage you to get your hands dirty. Even though I stand here on this side, my advice is free. So anytime you want to contact me, go ahead and I'll gladly help you.

In closing, I'm going to speak a little bit further to the agricultural potential and how our province needs to approach the actual expansion of our industry, and that is by sustainable development. The lofty target of doubling our production in two years is only going to put more producers out of business than in business. We'll have a large influx of new entrants subsidized by government funding and government initiatives but when it comes right down to it that heavy funding influx and focus on new entrants is only going to compromise existing industry.

We need to basically double the amount of funds that are available to producers if we want to double the amount of infrastructure and production capacity. What's more important to the production capacity is the marketing end of it, and that's not just coolers, harvesters, graders. We need to continue to culture the demand within our people, the demand within the local consumer to ask for agricultural products that are produced here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They're the ones who are going to really drive the production increase. They're the ones who are going to hold the retailers to the fire and demand they carry local products. That's really who controls our food system, it's the retailers.

We can have all the product we want available, but if the retailers are not willing to carry it and not willing to pay the farmers or producers a reasonable price, those farmers are soon going to find themselves out of business. It will be a continued waste of government investment because there's no market or no viability for those products.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

MR. LESTER: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

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

I'm very happy to stand up and speak to this Concurrence for the Government Services Committee and to talk about the work that went on through the Estimates phase.

For those that may be watching out there – and I have no idea if there's anybody watching – the fact remains that generally during a budget debate you're allowed to talk about anything. Whenever we talk about something called a money bill, it doesn't have to be limited to the bill and the good thing sometimes – because if you were listening to the Opposition, it also doesn't have to be limited to facts.

It's really unfortunate because when I speak about the Member for Mount Pearl North – who I think is obviously quite committed to his district. He takes the time to speak and I appreciate his commentary. The fact remains that there's a lot of it that's just really suspect. It comes down to – I hear some of the comments from Members opposite sometimes and it doesn't take long to show that they may not be accurate in their comments.

For instance, the leader of the Opposition, who I think is a fine gentleman, got up once last year, I'll never forget because –

AN HON. MEMBER: Which one?

MR. A. PARSONS: The current leader of the Opposition

AN HON. MEMBER: There were a couple.

MR. A. PARSONS: No, the current one, the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island. Congratulations on the new role. He realizes this is not personal, it's simply business.

What I would say is he got up one time – I think it was last year or the year before – and he was going on about the budget of 2016, which is roughly the same as now because it's 2018 and they're still talking about the budget of 2016. I'll talk about the budget of 2016, too, because that came after their last budget and their decade.

Really, when you think about it, it was the decade of a lot of lost opportunities.

What I want to do is talk about facts. He had talked about with this budget there's decreased consumer confidence, there are less trucks being sold, there are less cars being sold. You only have to talk to any dealers.

This is where I love sometimes the media and facts, and Stats Canada showed – and right there, I just happen to have it from a couple days before. I have a subscription – that's a free shout out now – to a group called allNewfoundlandLabrador. They do a great newspaper. It's an online subscription that gets sent out every night. I recall, I said: I remember reading something that's the exact opposite of what he just said. So I actually took it up and referred to it. That year there were actually increases in just about every type of car sales. What that showed was that – many times, as we see here in this House, facts and evidence show that what they are saying is simply not true.

I take that to go back to the Member for Mount Pearl North who – I wasn't going to be speak and he stands up. I'll get to the cannabis part now, but the first part was he talked about the population, outmigration. The good news for Marine Atlantic is they're going to be filling up all their voyages and vessels going out of the province. They're going to be filled up because everybody's leaving.

What I wanted to do is I come back to this wonderful thing called facts and evidence. What I did is I went to this site called stats.gov.nl.ca. The funny thing is we just have to look back through actual recorded statistics to show that what he's suggesting is simply not true.

In fact, if we talk about population numbers. Do you want the low point in terms of population in our province? It was actually in 2007, 509,000 roughly. Now that may be a coincidence because that's also the year when you look at the spending charts – and the Minister of Finance can talk about this. When you look at the spending charts of the province, they go along sort of like this and in 2007 it goes right up.

In fact, they had to build a new parking lot on the Confederation Building here. It's true. It's

out there now. They had to build that for the increase in the civil service. It ballooned. What's the percentage, I ask the Minister of Finance? What did it balloon? They increased it by – I'm not sure if it was 30 per cent; 30 or 40 per cent. It went up a significant amount. The funny thing is when they stand up now they talk about the fact that we need to cut costs. Well, I would say, that's not how you felt just a couple of years ago.

I go back to this, the stats and the facts and the evidence. We look at the fact that in 2015 the population was 528,815. They said: When you bring in this new budget, that number is going to go down. It's down. They're all leaving. They can't wait to get out of here; packed up, everybody gone.

The next year, actually, the population went up. The population went up, and it's still at – right now, the last recorded number in 2017 was at 528,800. It's still just about 20,000 higher than 2007. The statistics and the facts just don't bear out what they're saying. It's because what they're saying is not geared at the truth, it's geared at trying to create an impression that actions that we've taken are driving people out of the province. That, quite clearly, is not a fact. It's not true.

The fact is the steps we've taken are to ensure that people can stay here in this province because if we did not, the fact is this province probably faced their greatest look at bankruptcy ever in the history of the province, since the Commission of Government. Through the steps taken by the former minister of Finance, the current Minister of Finance and all the staff that work with them, we've taken a number of steps to make sure we get back in the right direction.

They talk about the doubling of production of oil. Now, I cannot remember what we budgeted oil at this year. I think it's \$63. I think actually right now, as of yesterday, it's at around \$78. The previous administration – even if oil is at \$100 or \$110, they spent at \$150 levels. That's the difference, but we're going to take a prudent approach here. We realize –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) at \$120.

MR. A. PARSONS: They budgeted at \$120; it's never going to go down again. Well, we saw how that played out. I want to talk about the fact that sometimes what they say has no bearing in reality, and that's the sad part here.

The other thing I want to address, because it's one thing to say it and it's another thing to do it. The Member opposite talked about cannabis and talked about how we shouldn't just let them do what they want. We should put our system in when we want to put it in. Well, what I would say is the unfortunate part is it simply doesn't work that way. There are certain things that fall under the purview of the federal government that they have every right to change and we need to change.

What we can do is we can do nothing and let the feds come in and put their own regime in place, put their own system in place. If we did that, we would hear no shortage of criticism from the other side saying: My God, you guys are in charge, why don't you put some laws in place? That's what they would say if we did that, but we're not doing that. We're doing the opposite of that, which is we are going to be ready during this session of the House to bring legislation forward to be ready for the impending legalization of cannabis. The federal government has every right to impose rules and make changes to legislation.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: There it is.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Yeah. The next thing you know if we didn't take the steps that we do to make sure we have a supply here, we'd have all the supply coming in from outside. There are a number of things there that we've taken, I think, positive steps in the right direction.

The other thing I want to contradict is the Member opposite says the legalization of cannabis will see a clogging up of the courts. That is simply not true. That's one of the main reasons the change is actually happening is that we have an overrepresentation of individuals incarcerated and going through the justice system because of the criminalization and the

illegal nature of cannabis. To suggest that the legalization is going to lead to an influx of people within the system is simply not true. There's no evidence whatsoever to back up what the Member is saying.

I said this when I was in Opposition, I hate to use the word – it makes me sick – “fear mongering” because every time we suggested something like when we talked about the fact that Muskrat Falls was going to be an albatross around our neck, we were fear mongering. When we talked about the different steps and changes that they were taking were going to be bad for the people of the province when we were in Opposition, we were fear mongering. Everything we do is fear mongering.

In this case maybe it's not fear mongering, but it's a deliberate attempt to put information out into the public sphere to confuse people when they know that it is not true. There's empirical and statistical evidence to show that's not the case. The reason we are doing this, the reason the feds have brought this in, as we've seen in other jurisdictions, is there is not an increase in crime. What we see is a reduction of the number of people going through the system.

The other thing the Members opposite said – the former leader of the Opposition a few months back said he supported the move. That's documented in the news. Then he changed his tune as we get closer and said: I don't know if I support this. He actually referenced an MLA in Nova Scotia and about psychosis and I don't know if we're making the right move, which is a fine time. We've been talking about it for two years and now you wait until the last session, a couple of months before the anticipated start date, to talk about your fears when you already said a couple of months back that you thought it was fine. That's a flip-flop at the greatest.

What I again say is that they talked about there's going to be everybody, once you legalize it – in fact, I heard the comments, I referenced this before in a speech. Look at Colorado; they can never get their state back. They can never get it back, as if the State of Colorado had been ruined. The facts show that in many cases, (a), there may have been no uptake or increase in the number of people that are using cannabis; and number two, in some states that did go up,

actually we saw a decrease after. You're not going to see this huge surge in the number of people that use cannabis. But now, a little news flash to people out there, people in this province right now are using cannabis.

MS. ROGERS: No.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes. I said to the Leader of the NDP, I know, I'm shocked too – I'm shocked too. I didn't believe it, but people are using cannabis. And the fact is that some of those people are kids.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: All right, take it easy.

Anyway, the fact is that cannabis usage in this province, even amongst the youth, is actually higher than it is in other places in Canada. We have people that use cannabis, and the fact remains that some people, as they do with alcohol, they use cannabis and drive. And that's one of the bigger concerns that we have now, is the safety on our roads.

But if you listen to the Member opposite, he's saying that now you're going to have everybody smoking cannabis, and they're all going to drive, and the police are useless is basically what they're going to say; and that evidence is going to be all tossed out, we are going to have a clog up in the courts, it's going to be madness – going to be madness.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, to quote – actually, I'm not going to use the quote from a former Member, because I don't want to bring that person's name up in the House. Maybe I could. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact remains that right now people do use cannabis and people do drive, and we have police that are trained and getting the same training as they get across Canada, across the States, standard field sobriety test where they can detect impairment and people get charged. We know that.

We also know that there are going to be challenges, new to us, new to everybody that you get when you have a new policy change like this. Do I think that the change from illegal to legal is going to be 100 per cent seamless, absolutely perfect? No, of course not; there will

be challenges. Every province will face them. You tell me a new public policy initiative of any kind in any department or any company that worked without some form of, well, we're making a change, we got to get used to this. I have no doubt.

What I can guarantee is that we, as a government, have taken every step we can to be prepared for this change. We have taken every step possible. In fact, we've had significant meetings recently on the different pieces of legislation that we have to bring in, and I'm quite confident in the pieces of legislation that we have.

I also have, contrary to some of the Members on the other side, I'm confident in the work of our police forces who will enforce road safety. I'm quite confident in their ability to do this. Now, do we have challenges? Of course, there is no federally approved screening device yet as there is for a breathalyzer, but that will come. Again right now, as I said, it's not like there's nobody out there – unfortunately, we have people who drive on our roadways and they do drive under that influence. It's illegal – it's illegal then, it's illegal now and it's going to continue to be illegal. That's not going to change. What we're going to do is bring in steps to make sure that we reduce that.

I have to come back to the crux of my speech, which is sometimes what Members on the other side say, it might sound good, but you just got to sort of scrape beneath it to realize that there's no basis in truth, in reality, in facts, statistics and evidence. Again, those are generally what I rely on when I try to make decisions; I try to rely on fact and evidence and try to look at other jurisdictions.

There are probably Oppositions in other provinces that are asking the same questions and make the same uniformed remarks that the Opposition here ask – again, sorry I'm not going to say Opposition because that's an insult to the Members of the NDP and the independent party. That's the Official Opposition in this case. That's an insult; I didn't mean that, my apologies.

What I would say is that the PC Party in this province – if you just check out, if you want to

see something interesting, go to some of the Google comments for PC Party comments from Nova Scotia by some of the MLAs over there. It goes beyond uninformed; some of the comments are racist in nature (inaudible). Now, I've not seen that from these Members which is good. I'm not seeing that. What I'm saying, though, is I'm seeing the same level of uniformed commentary when it comes to this. If they have actual concerns and questions, there can be briefings lined up at any point in time to discuss where we are as a province.

Those briefings are done by civil servants, good public servants of this province, many of whom I would suggest also – it's not like they were all hired by a Liberal government, many of them worked for the previous administration. They are non-partisan. Their job is to work for the people of this province and they do it well.

What I would suggest is if there are actual comments and questions, fears, concerns, by all means ask them, bring them forward and we will make sure that you have the evidence. But to go out in make comments as if they were factual when, in fact, they are nothing close to it, is really unfortunate, especially when we do it in this House and people are relying on us for the truth and relying on us for what they can expect, especially when it comes to something like this for which there are many questions.

On that note, I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to *Budget 2018*.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'm very happy to stand here this evening and to speak to Concurrence. There are two particular issues I'd be interested in speaking, let's see if I can get to both of them. I may just cover one this evening.

One of them is that I had the pleasure of attending Municipalities NL in Gander a few

weekends ago. There was something called the World Café. World Café is where there are experts or a host at each table. There are a number of tables in the room. You go to that table for 20 minutes, you hear what that person has to say and you have a discussion. There are maybe about eight or nine people at your table. Then after 20 minutes, you go on and move to another table with another facilitator, with another level of expertise on a different subject. It was great.

I was lucky enough to go to the table that was facilitated by John Norman. As many people know, John Norman is the mayor of Bonavista. As a matter of fact, I believe that John Norman is a superhero. If I could knit, I would knit him a superhero cape. He talked a little bit about what was happening in Bonavista because we –

MR. LANE: What about the MHA? Is he a superhero?

MS. ROGERS: Oh sure, the MHA is a superhero too. If he knows how to knit, maybe he can knit a cape for John Norman on my behalf.

MR. KING: I'll get mom to knit one.

MS. ROGERS: Okay, let's do that. It's a good idea. That's a great idea.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: Good. Who does? You do? Who does?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: I'd be willing to take a superhero cape sewn by yourself, Mr. Minister, there.

Bonavista is going through a renaissance and it's a very, very interesting renaissance. It takes a few champions to help facilitate this, but it's really a renaissance that's totally embedded in the community. It's a renaissance that happened –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I'm having a little bit of a hard time hearing myself here. I think everybody wants to get in on this conversation. They might in fact believe that they are at the World Café right now and at a table where we can all speak together. I tell you once the House closes I'd be happy to get together with all these Members and talk a little bit more and brainstorm some of these ideas.

The interesting thing about the renaissance in Bonavista is that it wasn't a government plan, it wasn't inspired by government, it didn't happen from the Premier's Cabinet Committee on Jobs up on the eighth floor or the ninth floor, wherever that Cabinet committee meets, it happened on the grassroots level from the people in the community. It actually flies in the face of all the plans that government would try to lay over it. It has increased its tourist activity in a four-year period from 24,000 visitors a year to 61,000. That's amazing. That's absolutely amazing,

Now people may think that, in fact, what happened is that Bonavista decided to get itself into tourism, but that's not what happened. That's not what happened at all. What happened is that Bonavista decided to look at, what did they need as a community? How could they make their community more liveable? Because like many towns in rural Newfoundland, they too were experiencing an exodus.

Young working families were leaving. Seniors were leaving to be closer to services, and the town was really experiencing the effects of that drain on their community. So what they did, their goal wasn't to create tourism. We'll hear a little bit more about their tourism. They simply used tourism as an engine for growth, but they weren't twisting and manipulating their town to appeal to tourists. They actually were building a more livable town for their own citizens. That's what they were doing.

They thought if we make our town really livable for the people in our community, where we build a fully sustainable community, where we build a happy community, then the tourists will come. Their goal was to increase the livability of their own town, of their own community.

He said they had been losing – in Bonavista alone they had been losing between 30 and 40 per cent of their population. That is significant, and leaves towns very vulnerable and unsustainable.

He said in the late '90s, Bonavista took an inventory of their assets. The concept of assets for Bonavista was very, very broad. They looked at some of the historical buildings in their town. They looked at the assets of the different types of people in their town – those were assets. They even looked at the assets of isolation and how that's something that appeals to people.

Then what they saw, they made a list. They made a list of the assets in their community, and what we must think of is they viewed assets in a very broad manner. They saw they had cheap buildings. There were a lot of less expensive, cheaper buildings in the town. They had a lot of infrastructure.

Then what they wanted to do was they wanted to brand their town as a good place to live which then becomes a good place to visit, but predominately their focus was on the people who are living in their town and also ways to encourage people to come and live in their town. Every decision they made was about the livability of their town. Every decision they made was about making their town more responsive to the needs of their people who lived in that town.

Some of the spillover effect of that, because there were funding opportunities but funding opportunities mostly for doing tourist activities. That's not what they were looking for; however, their tourist season now in Bonavista is seven months. In most places in the province it's four months maximum.

The shoulder season in their town has expanded their tourism season, but they were enhancing livability first. They knew by enhancing the liveability in their community that would attract tourists, and they also knew what would happen with that is they would attract more people to come and live in Bonavista.

For anybody who has been in Bonavista in the last year or two you can see the influx of new people into that town, young working families

who are setting up businesses, young entrepreneurs. So they had to say, what is it in the assets in our town or what assets do we have to build in order to attract more people? Because the only way Bonavista was going to survive is if, in fact, they attracted more people; not attracting more tourists. That's a secondary thing but attract more people to come and live in the town.

For instance, the Garrick Theatre; they wanted to get funding from ACOA to renovate the Garrick Theatre. ACOA said to them, we can give you some money to help you renovate the Garrick Theatre as a tourist attraction. They said no, that's not what we want. In fact, we want to renovate the Garrick Theatre for our own people and we want it to be a year-round asset where we can have live shows, live musical entertainment, film screenings, et cetera, year-round so that we are going to do it primarily for the people who live in our town. ACOA wasn't so sure about that. ACOA said, no, it has to be about tourism.

Bonavista said, no, this has to be authentic; our town has to be authentic. That means it's for people who live here, who live here year-round. We have to build community. What we will do, everything we do has to be good for the local people and then tourists will come. It has to be year-round. They managed to convince ACOA for funding to renovate the Garrick Theatre for the people of the province.

The other interesting thing they did is they developed an organization in their town called Townscape Foundation. The Townscape Foundation would apply for money from ACOA. What happened is the Town of Bonavista would give some money to Townscape Foundation which then would help them leverage federal funding and provincial funding.

What has happened now that they are so stable and much of their infrastructure is in place, money that they get for tourism activities through the Townscape Foundation actually is paying for their infrastructure, like boardwalks and sidewalks and those kinds of things. They said they needed the locals to be able to restore homes.

What the Townscape Foundation does as well, Mr. Speaker, is that the money comes from the town into the Townscape Foundation, ACOA money comes into the Townscape Foundation, provincial money comes and other pockets of federal money come into the Townscape Foundation. Then local people actually apply to the Townscape Foundation for grants or loans to be able to do really interesting projects.

What happens, then, is they're able to use the money in a way that is best for their community. Decisions are embedded in their community by local people who are managing the Townscape Foundation. How great is that? It's reminiscent of the gambine bank, where the gambine foundation would give money to small lending circles in communities in Southeast Asia. Then people would apply for money to the people from their own community because the people from their own community knew what would be effective. That's what the Townscape Foundation has done.

One of the things is that they needed locals to be able to restore their homes and to create a critical mass in the town. So the Townscape Foundation, in fact, was able to do loans or grants to local people, to fix up their heritage homes, to fix up the infrastructure of their town and that has been part of the real success of Bonavista.

The local college created a heritage carpentry and window construction course in the local college, which meant that everything was working in concert. Everyone knew what the goal was. Everyone was able to bring their particular skills, their particular resources to the goals and objectives that the town itself had developed for Bonavista.

The town started making policies that would also help foster the goals and objectives that were designed. For instance, the town will not let anyone tear down any old, abandoned buildings. How interesting is that? Some of the buildings that have abandoned for years, in fact, are getting renovated and young families are moving into them, particularly young families from away. Again, they not temporary, seasonal accommodations; they are actually houses for people who are living in that community year round.

He spoke about a lot of millennials who are really cool with moving to a place that appeals to them. That's what they're seeing. They're seeing millennials coming from all over. He told us that last year alone – this is a different story for a rural community in our province right now – they had dozens of couples move in to live full time in Bonavista. Not people just coming for the summer; these were young folks in their late 20s and 30s. They're having children. Some of them are bringing children with them and there are number of young families, working families, who are having children.

The Bonavista crowd, coordinated by John Norman, are having, the later part of June, a four- or five-day conference on revitalization of rural Newfoundland and Labrador – a conference about sustainability. I'm looking forward to going to some of that. It looks very, very exciting. I think we have a lot of learn from Bonavista.

I believe one of the things that's very important for this House is that they came up with a plan that worked in their community. It wasn't about government saying here's some tourist dollars and this is what you have to do with them; they are talking about an authentic, sustainable community in rural Newfoundland.

He also talked about working and visiting different parts of the globe, talking about his own experience in Bonavista, but also learning from other countries and their experiences with revitalizing rural areas. He talked about, for instance, the Country of Ireland. They have a 911 system. Do you know where that's operated out of? It's a surprising thing; their whole 911 system for the Country of Ireland is operated out of a small village of 300 people. That's what saved that village. That they embedded that work and that contract in a small village, helped trained the people in that village and that village deals with all the 911 calls in Ireland. That was pretty exciting.

Again, the key for the success of Bonavista was looking at making their town more liveable, and they called it: liveability first and then the tourists will come. They have a happy, sustainable community where people have work, where there are services, where there are schools, where there are medical services,

there's child care and there are a lot of independent businesses run by independent entrepreneurs. They will never let a MacDonald's, they will never let a Tim Hortons or they will never let a Walmart in there. They want their money spent locally and kept in the local economy.

They said they had to start with taking an asset inventory of their community. He said if it's a happy town, people will come to live, their population will grow and then the tourists will come too, because they will hear about that happy town. Also, entrepreneurs will take great risks because they know it's worth it.

That asset inventory is so important: commercial, residential – see how their assets can be reused. Unlike what's been happening here where we see schools are being sold off, rather than looking at really what is a way to use them in a benefit to the community.

Residential real estate in Bonavista has gone up by 57 per cent in the past few years, yet residential real estate in St. John's has gone down by 7 to 11 per cent. That's a real indication of a successful town. Did they strike oil? No, they did not. Did they open up a mine? No, they did not. Did they open up some kind of new government service sector? No, they did not. They did this on their own.

What he said is that Bonavista found their brand and that people are moving in. What is happening in that town is not making it a Newfoundland and Labrador Disneyland, but it's an authentic town that has a high quotient of livability. He said, in the last year alone, 31 new businesses opened up in Bonavista. In the Town of Bonavista, 31 new businesses opened. Over 12 businesses are doing manufacturing and exporting to Canada and the US from Bonavista. The young folks who have been moving in there and setting up businesses are actually exporting to the US and to Canada.

They've done great work. There's a lot that so much of us can learn from but, again, it's really about looking at what is real in communities. What can we do to help communities in a way that is real and authentic to who they are? Rather than making up our policies and our plans in an

office somewhere here in Confederation Building, what is it?

We must really listen to the people in particular communities around the province and ensure that any of the work that we do helped them build sustainability in their communities in a way that is real for them, in a way that is authentic and in a way that is based on what they want to see themselves for their communities. Bonavista really is an example of that. I recommend that people look at the conference they're going to do in the latter part of June, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thought there was somebody else speaking ahead of me. Sorry for the delay.

I am happy to stand tonight to speak as we do on the Concurrence debate around the Government Services. It will be sort of the last time I get to speak in any depth with regard to the budget and the direction in which this government is moving with its fiscal plan.

When you read the Budget Speech and you listen to this government every time they talk, they very proudly talk about their goal of getting rid of the deficit that was left to them by the past government. Every budget since they came in two years ago, the main goal is getting rid of the deficit. They keep insisting the deficit is a problem.

While this government is doing that and while they're saying that, other problems are being created or are increasing because of their focus on the deficit. When you focus on the deficit, so many other things become threatened. In the period of time that this government has been focusing on getting rid of the deficit, I'd like to point out that our employment rate has gone down.

It's in the government's own book from all the budget documents. This is the book that's called *The Economy*. These are the statistical indicators. While they are getting rid of the deficit, since 2015 to 2017, in those two years we took the biggest jump downward in employment that have been taken in a while. That's what happened because of focusing on the deficit.

Let's look at the unemployment rate. In that same period of time – surprise, surprise – the unemployment rate jumped up at about the same rate as the employment going down – not a surprise – while they're concentrating on getting rid of the deficit.

Let's look at the housing starts. Well, starts since 2014; a big jump down in 2015, and 2016-17 staying down, not going up. No growth. Our gross domestic product has gone down.

These are the things that are happening because of this government's concentration on getting rid of the deficit. I would be much more concerned if I were sitting in the seat of the Minister of Finance or the Premier's seat, about the rate at which our unemployment is going up than I would about the rate of getting the deficit down.

When I look at some of the good pieces of legislation that are coming into the House, and some of it is good, I have to say what's going to happen with this legislation? You take, for example, the bill that we've been dealing with here earlier today, Bill 14, the bill on children, youth and family, that is a good bill, but it's based on the need for an increase in resources. The goals that are laid out in that bill, the principles that are laid out in that bill, what that bill wants to accomplish can't be accomplished without input, without more resources.

If we say we really care about our children, we really care about our youth, we really care about our families and we are going to have services – for example, our young people now, if they're in care when they're 16 years old, now they can go on until they're 18 – they will be going on until they're 18, and if after 18 they still need assistance, they can get services until they're 21. Well, you can't do that without increased resources.

It also says in the bill the role of the social worker is key, it's so important. Well, our social workers are swamped with their work. They are swamped, and you can't find a front-line worker anywhere who would tell you they're not. They're doing their paperwork after hours at home on their dining room tables because they do not have time during the day to do it.

So if we're going to have an increase in services – which we need – if we're going to do that, then there have to be more resources put in. If this government keeps concentrating on we got to get the deficit down, got to get it down to zero – what '22 is it, looking at 2022 – then what's going to happen to what this bill is going to require?

A really important part of this bill is the section on indigenous children and indigenous families. What they're laying out, if this government starts getting into agreements with the indigenous governments and organizations – which they should – if they get into these agreements, these agreements are going to mean more resources, more resources and they should mean more resources, but if this government stays focused on getting rid of the deficit, then that's not going to happen. We'll have wonderful stuff written on paper, but going nowhere because we don't have the resources.

Look at what's happening to our university. Another \$9.3 million this year cut from their operations, Mr. Speaker, and the university is over there crumbling. We have wonderful people in that university. We have wonderful programs. The infrastructure is falling down around their neck.

The government talked to me about the new multi-purpose science building that's going up. That's one building. That building is needed because the building they're trying to do the science in right now is falling apart, but that's all over the university. Number one, here they are cutting operations and then also not putting adequate money into just the regular maintenance.

What's happening is if you wait until something completely crumbles, then it's going to cost so much more to rebuild or build something new, whereas if you're doing regular maintenance it's

much more logical. But if you're focusing constantly on getting rid of the deficit, that kind of thing gets put on hold. As it gets put on hold, it becomes more expensive down the road. As you get more buildings crumbling more, if you get roads that aren't in good condition – I know they talk about their five-year plan. I love their five-year plan. There's nothing wrong with the five-year plan except there's not enough money in it to really take care of all the roads that really need to be fixed.

I have a road that I can hardly drive on. You talk about the road to Burgeo, for example. That's one but they're all over the place, roads that you can hardly drive on. You can say: Yeah, you're in the plan for year four. What does that mean if you're driving on a road that's so dangerous that people's lives are at risk? We don't have enough resources going into that five-year plan to have enough roads be taken care of when they're needed to be taken care of.

That's what you're going to get from focusing on the deficit. It's really startling to me that this government doesn't see that fiscal policy is not a policy for growth. For example, if more money were going into our infrastructure and maintaining our roads, only one aspect of infrastructure – when they say infrastructure it seems roads are all they mean. There's much more to it.

Even in roads, if more money went into that and more people were hired – because that's what would have to happen – we had more people working, then you wouldn't see our unemployment rate going up and our employment rate going down. You'd see the opposite because you took your eyes off the necessity of getting rid of the deficit.

Do I mean you don't worry about it at all? Maybe you do a little bit, but not what they've done. Not this goal of setting the length of time at which you are going to completely eradicate it and not care about what's happening to the people in the province in between. I mean, that's the thing that's maddening. That's what I don't understand. That's what economists all over the place would say to them. They've come here from outside. Economists in the province tell us it's a basic economic fact that it's been proven over and over again that if you concentrate on

deficit and you don't look at growth and you don't look at how the services you put in place and the programs you put in place can add to the economy, if you don't look at that, then things are going to fall apart, which is what is happening.

When you look at the statistical indicators, you see that's what's going to happen. Yet, government has set goals for itself for five and six and seven years down the road with regard to growth and population, for example, without any concentrate facts that back up that population is going to go up.

When it comes to immigration, oh yes, that number is going to go up astronomically in the next five years. Well, not if they continue to focus on getting rid of the deficit and there's no employment for immigrants who are here. The international students who are at our university, we want to encourage them to stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, guess what? The door is opening for more of them leaving again. That's what's going on. We had a slight period of time where it looked like maybe that number was settling; it's not. They're starting to leave again because there's no work here for them.

It becomes very frustrating. You look at people across from you and you think, well, they have brains, they can think things through the way I can and the proof is there in their own book. The statistics are there. The labour force is not growing. Our labour force is going down.

Look at it in terms people. Labour force going down; fewer people working. Employment going down; fewer people in paid jobs. Unemployment going up; more people without work and having to be first on EI and then on income support. They only think about it in terms of maybe these stacks in the graph. These stacks in the graph are people. These are people.

Housing starts, that's industry. That's people who don't have jobs because houses are not being built now. The housing starts are down so much that means people in that industry who build don't have jobs. So where are they going? They're probably leaving the province. Guess what? Our population is going down. So yes, they are leaving the province. The population is

going down not just because of debts. The population is going down for a number of factors and one is more people leaving the province.

I get very, very frustrated; I've said that two or three times now. I can't see any other way to be but that. This government keeps saying: Give us ideas. We keep giving them ideas. If they had started putting a plan in place two years ago with regard to putting in place a child care program that was under government – that was a public child care program under government and that plan they started two years ago – we'd be close to having that plan in place now.

Putting a child care program in place means, number one, more parents employed because there are parents who are having to stay home and not look for work even because they have to take care of their children; number two, you'd have more people working in this new industry which is now developed into a really fine industry with well-paying jobs. That takes vision. It takes not being afraid to say we have to plan for five years and we have to set those plans in place. The only plan they've set in place is getting rid of the deficit. It's such a negative attitude, it just blows my mind.

Here we have roads that, in some cases, are so dangerous. The roads up the shore from St. John's, from here to Trepassey – you get past Calvert, I suppose, and on to Trepassey and around St. Mary's Bay – is unbelievable. It's disgraceful. It's hard to believe that you're in a developed country when you're on that road. We have other roads like it; as I said already, the road to Burgeo.

These roads are roads that people are driving on a regular basis. They come up from Trepassey to go to the hospital. The same way in Burgeo, that road is used because people have to use the road. Yet this government only sees it as a liability. Fixing them is only a liability instead of seeing hiring more people and having an aggressive plan put in place for fixing the roads that are really in terrible state. Maybe that would have really helped the employment situation. Maybe the economy really would have been helped if there had been a really aggressive plan –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – put in place for just fixing the roads that are really dangerous for people to be on. The same way with our ferries, we have people who are relying on ferries and you have other people going around saying why are they living on those islands anyway. That's not the kind of attitude we want here in this province. We want people caring about the people who are living on islands. They have a life on those islands, a life that has a long history. Yet, going on for a while in this province it was being generated in the media: Why are they living on Bell Island? Why are they living on St. Brendan's? Why they are living in these isolated places?

I have family in BC. Over the past 40 years, I've spent many visits out in BC; I lived there for a year and a half. Nobody complains about the islands off the coast of BC. Nobody complains about the people who choose to live in isolated places, where in some places it's only a walk-on flatbed almost that you're taking over to an island, but nobody says they shouldn't be living there.

The government realizes it's our responsibility, no matter where people are living, to help them live there because they are most likely – and I'm not aware of any cases where this isn't true, they are in their own way also contributing to the economy. This government doesn't see things that way. They don't see that taking care of people through the services that are required is not a liability, it's something that's part of the economy and the more we do that, the more vibrant the economy we have.

So when you look at places like Scandinavian countries and some European countries where you have free university, where you have universal child care that's there from the time children are six months old, where you have corporate taxation that really makes the large corporations pay their due, you have vibrant economies. You have vibrant economics in the Scandinavian countries, but we don't have that. This government just cannot think that way.

It's very, very frustrating. When you look through all of these documents that we've received as part of their budget, you know that

really people in the Department of Finance are good people. They're good people. They know how to think, but if you have a government, because it's this government's policy that drives the budget, it's this government's policy that makes the budget go the way it's going.

So when you say to the people who are putting your plans together, getting rid of the deficit is our number one requirement, and that's what they have to go towards, that's what they aim for, then it's not because they don't know fiscal policy. It's not because they don't know how to put a good budget together to take care of people. It's because they are being driven by the government's agenda.

It's like the government putting the university under the strain that it is now under, the university having to make decisions which they know are wrong, having to make decisions which they fear will hurt the students and which will hurt the quality of their education, but having to do it because this government has said, sorry, the money is going down – and not going down because they don't need it, but going down because this government wants to get rid of the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, as usual, the last year, the year before, that's when the map was laid, was in 2016. The map was laid for the direction in which we are going and this government hasn't changed its direction with this budget. Their prognostication for the next three, four years is to continue down this path, but look what will happen. They'll have no deficit, but we will have more roads that are in terrible condition, we will have more people who don't have jobs, we will have more people who will have left the province.

These economic indicators that I've referred to, wait until next year and see where they are. Each year the key ones that I've spoken about have gone down, except for unemployment, that's gone up. So that's the situation we're in, Mr. Speaker. It's not a good situation. It can be turned around, and that's what people need to hear, it can be.

When you get a government like this that says to a huge company like Canopy Growth, come in and take over, boys, come in and take over

because we haven't got people who know how to do this. Well, we do have people who know how to do it. We had people who were planning for the cannabis industry and their plans are out the window because of this Canopy Growth giveaway by this government.

MS. ROGERS: Forty million.

MS. MICHAEL: Forty million. It's disgraceful.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Once again, a budget that nobody can support on this side of the House, because we already voted against it.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to have a final opportunity now to speak to budget concurrence.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start off on a positive note, I suppose. In terms of the comments made by my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I do agree with her. I do share her disappointment with the way in which the Canopy Growth was handled. I do agree with her on that one. I really think there was a lost opportunity there. I really believe that, and I don't think it should have been given to Canopy.

I think we should've secured a supply for a couple of years like every other province did and then we should have worked with our local entrepreneurs and make sure they have the monopoly, not Canopy Growth, for a few jobs. We definitely shouldn't be giving them \$40 million in tax breaks, considering no other province did that either. So I will agree with her on that point, but I have to say that I do – and this not a personal slight, but I guess we see the world differently. We do. We see the world differently.

I have to say that in terms of her commentary about the budget – and I understand, I agree with her. I voted against the budget because of the heavy taxation that was put on that has not been relieved. That was my reason, particularly the levy. That was the big one for me. The whole

concept that my colleague just spoke about, that we shouldn't be concerned about the deficit, that's where we have to part ways. That's fair enough, because we don't all have to have the same views on things.

It's not just about the deficit. My God, the deficit, we're talking about 2022, I believe. Even with government's plan now is seven years to get to surplus – if you believe those numbers, seven years, 2022, to get to surplus. What about the debt? That means that every year between now and 2022 we're going to continue to run deficits. It's going to be added to the huge crippling debt we already have. Yes, I do agree with her in the sense that we'd all love to see every road paved, absolutely.

As she indicated, we passed a bill today – or we haven't passed it but we're still debating the new child protection bill. Yes, arguably if you're going to do some of the things there it's going to require additional resources and so on. I understand that, but at the end of the day who's going to pay for it all? That's always been my fundamental issue with my colleague. How do you pay for it? That's the question I've always had. I could never understand. That's why we could never see eye to eye on that issue.

It's all wonderful to say we need this, we need that, we need more resources here, we need to pave the roads, we need this, this, this, this and this and we can't lay anybody off, we can't cut – what are we going to do? Everybody can't work for the government. At the end of the day, when you look at – and this is my view of it, government is put there to provide services for people. Government is there to provide services for people. In an effort, as they do that and they provide those needed services based on the money coming in, employment is created.

My colleague would, I believe, infer that really government's job is to create jobs, is to hire people to work for the government. I do not believe we are hiring people to work for the government. We're providing services. As a result of doing that, people get hired. It's the same thing as the private sector. The private sector's job – when someone opens a business they do it to make a profit, to make money. That's why they're in business, to make money. The by-product of them making money is the

creation of jobs and the creation of wealth, which hopefully leads to more jobs. That's how it works, isn't it? At least that's how I understand it to work. That's how it should work.

I cannot get my head around the fact that we have a huge – we're running deficit after deficit after deficit. We have a huge debt and we're supposed to ignore that, forget about it. We were told we couldn't make payroll. We were told a year ago or whatever it was – if we want to believe it, I'm only taking the minister at his word – we couldn't make payroll. So we were in a situation we couldn't make payroll. We're running deficits until 2022, which is piling on to the huge, astronomical debt.

Then we have Muskrat Falls and the overruns and what that's going to cost. Arguably, that's going to take an infusion of taxpayers' money to subsidize it. I mean one or the other. If the ratepayers are not paying for it, the taxpayer is going to pay for it through subsidies or something. At the end of the day, it's more money we're going to have to come up with. People are already paying more taxes than they care to pay. More than they can afford, in a lot of cases. We need to get that down.

The solution is hire more people, pave more roads, do more, do more, do more, more resources, more resources, more resources. My God, it's just not realistic, is it? I don't understand how it's – I would love for the Member to be able to show me how that works. I really would, and I wish it was that simple. I really wish it was. If it was, sure that would be perfect. Keep on spending and spending and the debt goes away. The deficit goes away and everything is fine. I wish it was that easy. I do.

I don't mean to be critical of the Member. That's just our opposing views, and I hope she understands that. That's just our opposing views of how the world works.

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Fair enough. No, and the Member is free to say whatever she wants to say and I'll say what I want to say but I just don't understand it. I do not understand the logic.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to move on. I just want to very quickly – I'm not going to take the full time. I do just want to reference an issue that I have a concern about. It relates to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, Nalcor I guess, and the division of Nalcor that was in the budget. I hope I'm wrong. I say to the minister, in all sincerity I hope I'm wrong, but I have concerns.

My concern from the very beginning, when this happened, was that this wasn't about providing focus to oil and gas as much as it was about separating the company, because we have bigger plans for the hydro side, whatever those plans might be. That's my concern.

One of the things that came to mind was privatization, selling off assets and so on. There was an article in *The Telegram* last week – I think it was last week – by Ashley Fitzpatrick; I forget the name of it. She was talking about Mr. Perry who is the CEO of Fortis. He was saying that he was interested in purchasing for a fair price – whatever fair price is and I would ask fair for who – assets from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, transmission assets. The minister said, in the article at least, was quoted as saying that everything was on the table and she wasn't closing the door to that idea. He said it would help deal with the Muskrat Falls situation and so on.

So it's a concern I have. I don't want to see us in a situation where because we're in a vulnerable situation with Muskrat Falls that we're going to start privatizing or selling off stuff out of desperation. If that's not the case, great, I hope it's not; but I just want to pay for the record that it's a concern that I have, that's all. It's a concern that I have.

Then, of course, when you look at that, I also have the concern and I wonder: Is there anything else going on with Emera, with Fortis, with Hydro-Québec and so on? Are there any other discussions and stuff going on that we're not aware of? I just think it's something we have to be cognizant of, something that we have to be mindful of.

I will also say, in terms of this discussion with Mr. Perry and so on that was in *The Telegram* and quoted on it, potential deals or sales to

Fortis, Newfoundland Power, from Newfoundland Hydro, I will say again, I have concerns, as I've had from day one, that the CEO of Nalcor is permitted under his contract to have 5 per cent shares in Fortis.

We were told there's no conflict because it's in the contract. I still have a real problem with that arrangement. I have to be honest, I do. Now, particularly when you're hearing about Newfoundland Hydro possibly thinking about selling assets to Fortis while the CEO of Nalcor has shares in Fortis, then I have concerns. I have concerns about it.

I went to the former Auditor General, almost two years ago now, and I asked that he investigate that matter, that he look at this arrangement to see if he saw any issue with this arrangement with the CEO under his contract being allowed to have shares. He committed to me that he would investigate it. I followed up with him a number of times. He said they were in there and they were investigating it. He said a report would come out in the spring, then he said the fall, then he retired. So then I went to the new Auditor General and she said it's still on the table, and I'm still waiting.

So it's been almost two years now and I'm still waiting to get an answer as to if there is any issue with that arrangement, that the Auditor General thinks there is any issue. But while this is happening, as I said, we have discussion publicly in the media between Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Fortis about potential sale of assets. I just say, for the record, it's a concern. Maybe it'll all work out fine; maybe there are no issues. I hope there isn't. But for the record, for *Hansard*, it's a concern that I have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to take any more of my time.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to address my colleague's assertions that he just made, Mr. Speaker. Allow me to say that Fortis currently owns 63 per cent of all transmission – that's transmission and distribution lines – and 79 per cent of

distribution lines. So they currently own a significant amount of transmission lines in this province.

So when I was asked if I have a problem with them owning transmission lines, of course I don't, Mr. Speaker. They have owned transmission lines in this province since the very beginning of electricity in this province. Now, Emera – and the Member opposite, of course, was part of the government that allowed Emera to come into the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and buy transmission lines, bring in transmission lines.

So clearly, he doesn't have a problem with a company owning transmission and distribution lines in this province, because he was part of the government that brought them in. I certainly have no problem, because they already own transmission lines in this province.

That was a comment that I made to *The Telegram* when I was asked about Mr. Perry's comments about whether or not he might be – he was speaking as part of his annual general meeting in response to a comment by the media or question by the media. When I was asked about this comment, of course they already owned a certain percentage, majority percentage of the transmission and distribution lines in this province and certainly we would be supportive of a Newfoundland company in doing anything that they can to support the province. Fortis is a huge company, a very successful company, globally not just in Newfoundland and Labrador.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can inform that there are no ongoing discussions. I think the Member alluded to the discussions between Hydro; none to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in a general sense, everyone in this House, or we certainly would have been discussing it before now, supports Fortis. It's a very, very fine company and they currently offer, through Newfoundland Power, great service to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I wanted to correct the Member opposite on some of his statements and make sure that, for the record, it was noted that Fortis, since the very beginning of Newfoundland Power, the very beginning of electricity in this province, have been involved in transmission business,

have been involved – and, as I said, 63 per cent of transmission; 79 per cent of distribution.

They certainly have a record and I think, overall, a very good record, Mr. Speaker. I don't hear too many complaints about Newfoundland Power and none about Fortis, for sure. A fine Newfoundland company with a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians doing very good work for the company; proud to have such an international company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, headquartered here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, I'm going to call the question.

The motion is that the report of the Government Services Standing Estimates Committee be concurred in.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

On motion, Report of Government Services Estimates Committee, carried.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper to continue second reading of Bill 14.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak to his bill. I'm not going to speak long. I certainly listened to the minister and she did a good job

when she brought this bill in this afternoon. I listened to the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune as well in particular. I just wanted to say for the record –

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi asked if I listened to her and, unfortunately, I was over to the Premier's athletic awards. I stepped out for a little bit there – I had some constituents – or I would have listened intently, I can assure you.

I just want to say, for the record, we all had a briefing; it was a very good briefing. There's nothing here that I have any particular issue with. I think it's time that this was done and I think that everybody did a good job with it. I'll be supporting the bill.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development speaks now, she will close the debate.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just clue up with a few comments that I've heard from colleagues in the House. I want to start by thanking all of the speakers today who spoke to Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families – a very important act; I think a historic day in this province as we move forward and work toward Royal Assent and then the implementations of the policies and the regulations that I believe will make life better for children and youth in this province.

So I want to thank the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for both attending the press conference today. She had some nice coverage this evening on the evening news I saw. I want to thank her for her feedback on this bill. I want to thank my colleague, the Member for Torngat. As a member of Nunatsiavut, NG, and living up there on the North Coast it certainly brings a pretty solid perspective to how things are in the area that he represents, has a good understanding of that and does a good job representing them.

I want to thank the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for speaking to the bill. She's always very interesting to listen to and brings a lot of experience into the House. And my parliamentary secretary, the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, who did a great job today speaking to Bill 14, but does a really good job every single day in that large department. There are lots of things that I can't be at or do, and he picks up a lot of the slack and I really appreciate him, more than I let him know, that's for sure. And he works very hard every day for his district as well.

I want to thank our independent Member in the House for speaking to the bill and for the input that he had. I don't think, Mr. Speaker, at this hour in the evening I need to go into too much of reiterating the purpose of the act. There were six main points. It's getting a lot of coverage out there in CBC and NTV. Everything from what I could see – it's interesting when you bring in a bill, introduce it in the afternoon and then you go into the evening, tonight, you get to see some feedback before you stand to close debate. That's not always the case with bills.

From what I have seen thus far, it's been really humbling when you see people like Sheldon Hollett who does really valuable work down there, working with youth, many youth that are in challenging circumstances, who is optimistic about this bill and where it may go and what it may mean for how we do business with children and youth in our province. That was very encouraging, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to work with the stakeholders going forward, continue to engage them in the policy development piece. As we move into Committee in a few minutes, I welcome some of the questions. I am really pleased with the support for the bill in the House. I absolutely understand that even when you speak and say you support the bill in principle, that you would still have questions, and I'll do my best to answer those questions, Mr. Speaker, when we move into Committee.

I know a couple of the speakers mentioned the licensing regime. I saw a little bit of that in the media. I just wanted to say – and I will still take questions, but I wanted to put on record, Mr. Speaker, we will not be cutting social workers

through the establishment of agencies and family-based care. That is not the intent here at all; I want to clarify that. Mr. Speaker, CCSD, the social workers in our department will have a greater opportunity now to focus on the monitoring of children and youth, and it is our intent that this will lead to more positive outcomes.

I think some people were asking about privatization. Mr. Speaker, no, that is not the intent here at all. That will not happen. This will add to or complement what's out there already. It will not replace the ongoing, the recruitment, the assessment and the approval of foster homes, but it will add to – there's a tremendous need, as I think all speakers here today recognize, for things like more foster homes.

Social workers will continue to carry out these tasks of recruitment and approval of homes, but licensed agencies will add to the total number of foster homes available. I also want to stress and I did say this earlier today this is a very, very important point that I probably cannot reiterate too many times, and that is that the monitoring of the safety, health and well-being of the children will always remain the responsibility of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the social workers that work there.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I'm quite humbled to have brought in a bill that has the potential to have such a positive impact on the lives of what I think is our most valuable resource in our province: our children and our youth.

With that, I will just thank everyone again and I'll take my place.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 14 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families. (Bill 14)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has been read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 14)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families.

A bill, “An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families.” (Bill 14)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Am I only allowed to ask questions on Clause 1 or anywhere?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. PERRY: Okay, because clause 2 is where I want to start.

My first question pertains to definitions. In comparing Bill 14 with the definitions which currently exist in the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*, most are the same or have minor changes to them.

The only question I have here is the definition of youth is: a person who is at least 16 years of age but under 18 years of age. Yet, a future clause in the bill, 88(3), talks about providing services up to the age of 21. Can you clarify that for us?

Just to confirm, Mr. Chair, will we go question for question? I'll ask a question and then the minister will respond?

CHAIR: Yes.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Yes. Can you just give some clarity around the difference?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the question. There are a couple of different things here. In one part we're talking about youth that are in our care that could choose to opt out at the age of 16. What we have done in this bill, we have now made it mandatory that they cannot opt out until the age of 18.

There's that critical period in your life, 16, 17; what we have been finding in the department, and the social workers around the province, is that the youth who needed the most support were the youth that were choosing to leave at the age of 16. Now they cannot opt out until the age of 18.

Aside from that, we have youth around our province that need various services. We can provide things like rent and board and lodging. Those youth can now receive services up to the age of 21; so a couple of different things there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

I'm looking at clause 2 as well, the definitions. Minister, I'm going to be sort of dealing with numbers together: (n), (o), (p) under clause 2.

The definition under (n): “Indigenous child’ means (i) an Inuit child, (ii) a Métis child, (iii) an Innu, Mi'kmaq or other First Nations child, (iv) a child who has a parent who considers the child to be Indigenous, or (v) a person who is at 12 years of age but under the age of 16 and who considers himself or herself to be Indigenous.” It's very inclusive. It's excellent.

Then (o): “Indigenous government or organization’ means the entities prescribed in the Schedule.” The Schedule is at the back of the bill, of course, and it's the “Miawpukek First Nation, Mushuau Innu First Nation, Nunatsiavut Government, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation.” That's very clear also.

Then when you come to (p) it says: “Indigenous representative’ means a person designated by an Indigenous government or organization.” So that means the indigenous representative can only be

designated by somebody from the four, government and organizations, in the Schedule.

My question is: What happens to the children under the definition of indigenous child who are not covered? The children of Qalipu, for example, and Métis children, who is going to be their indigenous representative? Because according to this, there is nobody appointing an indigenous representative for them.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the question; it's a very important one. As she would know, I'm a member of NunatuKavut Community Council so we wouldn't want to leave them too far behind.

What I will say is going through this process, and I talked about it earlier today, we had extensive consultations around the province; but, in particular, with the indigenous groups and organizations, dialogue with all of them including Qalipu and NunatuKavut.

We had to put a schedule in place for something to start with, in terms of for court proceedings and things like that. NunatuKavut and Qalipu, right now, seem to be more economic, more focused on working toward securing their land claim.

We are happy; we invited them: If you decide that you want to be on this list, come back and have dialogue with us. We're going to take 12 months to put this through, to get the training done, to get the policy developed. They may come back even within the 12 months and we would certainly be receptive to adding them to that list.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

Just to follow up, Minister. With regard to Qalipu, they're a landless band. They're not going to ever have land. So I hope that wouldn't

be a consideration to stop them from joining this.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

No, they were consulted. They were aware. We've reached out. We've had dialogue and they're quite pleased with not being on this list right now. Yes, we certainly wanted to make sure that everybody who wanted to be there was there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to move ahead now to clause 6. If my colleague wants to pick up for me afterwards, I'm jumping ahead to six. This clause appoints directors within child protection. The *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* directs the appointment of a provincial director of protective intervention and in care and it also lists their duties. The new act is a bit more vague and it just lists directors.

My question in this clause is: Why was the specific name of the director removed and left open as directors? How many directors are now in the department which are responsible for the children and youth protection activities? That would be clause 6.

Clause 25, actually, I'm up to now. Where a child is not removed under that section – clause 25 outlines the timeline for holding a protective intervention hearing where the child has not been removed from the home in the current *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*. The timeline for the hearing is 30 days, but in the new bill the timeline is going to be shortened to 10 days.

My question on that is: How will the Family Court adjust to this? Does the court have adequate resources available?

Another question that I have pertaining to this clause is: What feedback was received from the families who were consulted about the timelines

for protective intervention hearings? Were there any considerations given to change any of the other timelines for hearings?

I also notice in this clause the provision is added where notice is served to the indigenous representative, where the child is indigenous under section 25(3)(c). Are there any situations where this would not occur, where the indigenous representative would not be notified of a protective intervention hearing regarding an indigenous child or youth?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To answer the Member's first question about the number of directors, there are currently two. I won't speak to court resources or if there will be more court resources; I'll leave that to my colleague, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

What I can tell the Member is there are a lot of provisions in this bill to circumvent and save time on a number of things, how it existed today in terms of temporary court orders and things like that. Things that normally took about a two-year period, we should be down to about a six-month time frame now.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

Minister, I'm looking at clause 10. Clause 10 is quite extensive because it talks about when a child is in need of protective intervention, and it goes on and gives the whole list of this. It includes also in subsection (2): "For the purposes of paragraphs (1)(c) and (f), the indicators of emotional harm exhibited or demonstrated by a child may include" and you have another list.

So it's quite inclusive, but it doesn't indicate who is it that determines this. Is it the social workers? I've actually had a social worker say to me: We feel left out. Who is it that is going to make the determination? Under all of this, what

would be a child who would need protective intervention?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the question. So it is the social workers who make the decision, but they have a lot of tools at their disposal to assist them in doing that. We have social workers – 350 in the Department of CSSD, thereabouts, out and around the various places. Most places we have teams of social workers that work together and then they report to a zone manager that reports up to a director.

We just recently implemented a new tool that's being received really well in the department across offices, the integrated structural management, a decision-making tool to help them when they're making those decisions about really challenging circumstances. The Member is right. So is this child in need of protection? Maybe we just need to keep them in the home, provide wraparound supports.

There are a lot of different things, a lot of different tools to help the social worker in making that determination.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have a general comment in regard to her question. In your closing of Bill 2, you referenced the capacity issue and licensed agencies will add to that capacity.

I wonder if you can give an indication of what you estimate that under capacity to be right now, which these new licensed agencies will fill.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I've been speaking to a number of times today, when it comes to children in care – and we have children right now that, unfortunately, are in, what we call, ILAs in some cases,

independent living arrangements. Maybe some of those children could be in foster care, but we do not have a sufficient number of foster homes in our province because the demand exceeds the space that we have.

When we bring in some of these people – and there are two different things we’re talking about here – we will work with agencies to recruit and find more foster homes. In some cases, we will work with groups to find placements for children within the communities and hopefully move more people out of these independent and group homes and things like that.

I don’t know if that answers your question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister. In this particular instance, these new agencies, there would be a fee structure set up for them and for the services they provide, I assume, based on that under capacity. How would that work in regard to the fees paid to these licensed agencies and the work they do?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Generally, if we work with a third-party agency, there is an agreement that’s worked out and put in place. That’s how we proceed.

The monitoring, safety and well-being of the children will always be left with the department. I don’t know if that answers your question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you.

Yeah, I’m just trying to get to the point of these agencies will provide a service to the department in regard to the care for children. They will be new, my understanding, in regard to the service and oversight they provide.

There will have to be a structure in terms of how they’re paid and what the cost will be. I just want some insight into what that would look

like, what it would be and what the cost would be, that kind of thing.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, some of what we will be doing is not new; we recently had a pilot with a couple of third-party agencies. All of the early indicators of that, not only was it more an efficient way to do some of the important work that we do, there was savings, but all early indications back are very, very positive in terms of that it was best for the children.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I’m going into clause 28 now, Minister, and that is when the 16th birthday intervenes. Language is added in this clause which clarifies what happens if an order has been filed and a child turns 16.

Can the minister explain what happens when a child in care turns 16, or if a youth who is the subject of a protective intervention hearing turns 16 during the course of a hearing? Can the minister outline what changes are being made with respect to how the 16th birthday is going to be treated by the department?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I’m not sure if I entirely understood the Member correctly, but what we are doing here with Bill 14 is we are now increasing the age. So a child could opt of care at 16; now we are making it mandatory so that they do not have the option to leave care, even if they desire to, until their 18th birthday.

Speaking with my colleague – grabbing a bite at supertime –from Stephenville - Port au Port, who has tremendous knowledge in this area and worked for about five years with youth, he too was echoing today what we have heard from

many of the stakeholders and groups that are very pleased with children not going to be able to opt of care until their 18th birthday. There'll be a couple of more years of maturity and maybe focused on school and, hopefully, done high school by that age.

As I alluded to earlier, any youth that's out there that requires services what we will do now with this plan, I say to the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, we are going to work with the individual and put together an individualized plan for that youth so that if they needed things like room and board and whatever, they can receive services up until they're 21.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We always get excited and jump ahead.

In the case then of a protective intervention hearing that's underway, for a child who's 15, and their birthday happens, they turn 16 during the course of that protective intervention hearing, would that be treated any differently by the department? I guess just add some clarity to what I was asking.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

We would certainly continue on with that care.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

Minister, I'm now looking at clause 32 subsection (9) and (10); page 33 of the bill, if you're using the same one.

It's about the order for supervision. "Where a judge makes an order for supervision under paragraph (2)(a) or an order for temporary custody under paragraph (2)(b) and a person fails to comply with the order, the manager or social worker may make an application to the

court to vary the conditions of the order or request another order under paragraphs (2)(a) to (e)."

Then the next subsection: "The date set for the hearing of the application under subsection (9) shall be not later than 5 days after the application is made."

I've heard from some social workers who are delighted with the bill, as I am myself. But they say – and I know you made some reference to the legal system a couple of minutes ago – sometimes they have to wait so long to get to a judge that they said the five days is just not going to be realistic. They have concerns about it's not recognizing that the system as it works right now, even sometimes when it's very urgent, they don't get to a judge in a timely fashion and they have real concerns about it.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Member makes a valid point. I hear it. We hear it from our social workers.

Sometimes we're a little bit challenged with the courts. The wait times also seem to vary because some courts across the province are busier than others. Nevertheless, all I can say is we will attempt to comply with this new measure that we're implementing as best that we can.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

I guess, Minister, then, what I'd like to ask is let's say you get an area where maybe they can never meet that five days and they feel awful because they can't comply. Number one, I'm assuming there will be no penalty on their part because of that, but would there be any – I guess if an area went to you and said we can't meet this, that's something you would take under advisement?

MS. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is not the only one excited here tonight about Bill 14. I'm jumping ahead. It's been a really long day, Mr. Chair.

We are discussing a very important bill here, Bill 14, in Committee answering questions for the Opposition Members on An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families. Yes, there are challenges, there are many. Our social workers on the ground, the zone managers, we work very closely with the courts. We will just attempt to make our way through that and deal with the barriers and the challenges as they come forward.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Clause 29 – I'm going to go back just two clauses, Minister, the plan for the child. This clause outlines the plan for the child which must be filed with the court.

Added to the legislation is 29(3)(e)(iii) which notes that “a description of the arrangements made or being made for the child's stability and permanency” must be in the child's plan and filed with the court. In other words, permanency planning must occur earlier, and it must be on file with the court.

Also added is 29(3)(e)(iv), which notes that “a description of the arrangements made or being made to recognize the importance of the child's identity and cultural and community connections, or, where the child is an Indigenous child, a cultural connection plan.”

The cultural connection plan is a new element to this legislation. Can you elaborate for us on what is expected to be contained in a cultural connection plan? What are the elements of the plan? Who will be expected to write the plan, and will indigenous representatives be engaged in the writing of it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the really important question. She's right, preferably two things that you ask about, permanency planning, the earlier we address that I think the better for the child. That's one of the things that I see really positive in this act. Some of the stories I've heard just since I've been in the department, you might have a baby, an infant that's born and they've been waiting kind of two, three years and those first early formative years of their life waiting for a permanency plan. Some of that is going to be changed now. It's going to be expedited through the system.

The cultural connection plan is something that we heard again and again when we were doing consultations with the indigenous organizations and governments. It's something they wanted, because where possible we keep the children in their communities with kin, or if not with kin at least in the community.

In some circumstances children have been removed from environments that they were very familiar with, that was home to them and they've gone to other places. Now they will have to have a plan. What that plan will look like, we will work very closely with – for example, members of Nunatsiavut will be very involved, the indigenous groups. They will say this is what we believe is best for the child, and we will put together a plan in direct consultation with them.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

This may be my last question. There might be another one, but I think this one I have, I know I definitely want to ask. So we're looking at clause 88 on page 58, Youth Services Agreement section.

I didn't get to say this in second reading, but I'm delighted with the Youth Services Agreement. It's wonderful, because you've mentioned youth 16 to 18, well a lot of them even 19 and 20 are

still mixed up and confused and not stable. I'm really delighted with this section.

Looking at subsection (3): "Where the youth is engaged in a plan approved by a manager or social worker, an agreement under this section may be extended until the youth reaches the age of 21." Meaning, of course, they would have services until they're 21.

Subsection (4), and this is the one I'm questioning: "Where a youth is provided with services, the cost of those services may be recovered and an action or other proceeding for the recovery of the cost may be commenced." It doesn't give any provisos. I have spoken to some social workers about it and they say personally they have never seen it happen. I'm assuming, and one of the social workers said to me: well, you know, if you have a child whose parents are millionaires this probably would be quite valid. It doesn't say it has to happen, it may be recovered.

I'm just wondering why it's even in the legislation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is an important question. I'm pleased to hear the Member opposite say she's happy with the Youth Services program as well. I think we all agree there's a lot of youth out there struggling and we need to do what we can to help them get on the right road and provide the support.

That was put in the bill because in some circumstances maybe a parent could pay, but if a parent cannot pay the services we offer certainly will still be available to those youth up until the age of 21.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I may not have all my facts now on this one, Minister, but it follows. It is a direct follow-up and I think I am satisfied that it leaves the option

there if parents can afford to pay it but I also understand that if a youth is earning money there's a clawback of \$200. Now that's not in legislation, that's in practice I think. Am I correct on that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure if the Member might be referring to something under the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. I'm not familiar, but I'll try and get some clarification for you in the next couple of minutes.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm now up to clause 32 but it's a different question than my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi asked. Clause 32(2)(e) is the new addition. It gives the judge the ability to permanently transfer custody to a person other than the child's parent. It's done in consent of the person who will get custody, the child, if they are 12 years old or older, and if the child has been residing with this person for a period of at least six months.

This is the option for a social worker to recommend permanent custody in order to help find permanency in a timelier manner for the child. The social worker can apply for this option if there is evidence that this placement or individual is the best person or persons for the child's well-being.

My question is: How will a social worker or manager determine when it is appropriate to ask the judge to award permanent custody under this provision? What information will be used in the decision-making model? Is the judge's decision final or is it subject to appeal?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the question. I'm going to take one moment to respond to the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and say you were accurate in your information, but that is a part of what is currently under review in the department, in response to that.

Around the custody and the period of six months, there are so many stories and examples that I could share with the Member of how we would know and social workers would know. When a child is born and they're placed with a significant other, you can know very early that the child may never be able to be placed with the parents. I'm thinking of a conversation I had with social workers over in Cordage Place, actually, when we proclaimed Social Work Month.

Unfortunately, sometimes you have generations of people who – you have parents that have children and they end up in child protection and their children end up in child protection. Sometimes we have a responsibility, as soon as the child is born, to take that child into our care to keep it safe.

We know, based on those years of history and sometimes decades of history – and if all of their children they've had to date are placed in care – that it's probably not in the best interests of the child, which is a very significant focus of this legislation, to kind of hang around and wait around for years to see if we can place the child back. If they're with a significant – especially another family member, we believe it is in the best interests of the child to get them settled somewhere as soon as is possible.

All of this in the bill is based on feedback that we have heard from our consultations around the province, from indigenous groups, but also from the hundreds of social workers who use that current legislation day in and day out. They provided some really valuable feedback on that as well, based on how they're doing business with the 2011 act.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister. I'm moving ahead now to clause 35 when time limits expire. This clause outlines what happens when the time limit placed on a temporary custody order expires. When this occurs, a judge has a number of options that he can choose from, one of which is to place the child in the continuous custody of a manager. The current *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* notes this order may not contain conditions, but the new legislation notes that it may contain some reasonable conditions.

Can the minister explain why this change is being made and what impact this change will be expected to have?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to go back to the question the Member asked earlier – I think she might have asked three in one; I answered two. I missed the third one. She asked a question around the courts. Once there's a permanent court order, can that be changed?

I want to say once the court has ordered permanent it is permanent unless it is changed by the court. Today we're discussing the bill; we're looking for Royal Assent. Over the next 12 months, we will be working out the policy and the policy will outline the process for that.

I'm trying to remember what the second part of her question was before I sit down. It was on the conditions. The judge will put in place conditions that are reasonable. They will want us, the social workers, to go with a reasonable plan and some of those details are being worked out as we go forward.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Clause 42, when continuous custody order ceases to have effect; currently a youth can make a written request and have the order removed, but under the new legislation I think that option has been removed. Youth is defined now as 16 to 18. This means most youth now, it

will be mandatory to stay in care of course until 18.

At what age can a youth or young adult now remove themselves from care? What happens if a youth who is in care in Labrador wants to attend university or school or work elsewhere outside their current placement?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's a good question that the Member asked. As I said earlier, a youth cannot, even if they want to, opt out of care prior to the age of 18. We have all kinds of wraparound supports that we provide and that we would continue to provide. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, we support the youth with providing them with educational options. We would certainly do that for them and work with that individualized plan that I was referring to earlier, regardless of where they live.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: I did have one more, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

Minister, clause 40, which is another part of the continuous custody – so the continuous custody, under that the manager becomes the sole custodian of the child and has the right to make all decisions regarding the child. The manager of a social worker may consent to the provision of health care for the child and the manager may consent to the adoption of the child.

Under subsection (b) that seems to be fairly narrow by just saying the provision of health care for the child. Could you imagine that there are other supports that the child may need as well? Or do you have a very broad definition of health care?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the question. Many of the needs of the child, because of the very nature

of the work that we do in Children, Seniors and Social Development, are already being addressed. Health, in particular, was an issue because you may have a child in your care that you have not adopted and the child might break their leg. You go to the hospital and you need consent and things like that.

I look back to when I was raised by my grandmother I don't think there were too many formal agreements. Whatever happened to me, she took me to the hospital, those needs were dealt with and there were no questions asked, but we are now living in a different time.

The social worker or the manager in this case has to act in a parental role. They have to make those decisions, yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Clause 54, Application to be heard; this clause outlines who can be heard at a court proceeding and the legislation outlines that "a person significant to a child; and (b) an Indigenous representative ..." if the child is indigenous can be heard.

How is significant to a child defined? Will this include teachers, babysitters, neighbours, family friends, and does it include siblings?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When we speak about a significant other, and I'll wait for support from this, but it's my understanding that we are talking generally about a family member, about a kin. In most cases it could be a parent, it could be a step-parent, it could be an auntie, it could be a grandma or someone like that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of placement considerations under clause 65, this clause outlines the considerations which a manager or social worker must look for when placing a child who's in care. The bill contains language pertaining to indigenous children: where a child is an indigenous child a social worker must first consider placing the child with kin in his or her own community, but if that is not in the best interest of the child then the social worker can place the child with a non-relative foster parent with the same cultural background within the community or with kin outside the community. If this cannot be done, then a foster placement which supports the connection with the child's culture, heritage, traditions, spirituality and language will be found.

I have two questions under this section. The first is: How will foster homes in indigenous communities be recruited, and how many foster homes currently exist in indigenous communities? As well, if a child has a close family member who is willing to foster the child but they live outside of the province, would that be considered?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for the question. One of the aspects of this bill, one of the things we will be implementing is the provision to add to complement the recruitment, the assessment and the approval of foster homes.

As I talked about earlier today, we will now go out and develop an agreement with a third party agency. There may be someone close to an indigenous organization, for example, because we know the reality is there that we have an overrepresentation of indigenous children in care. They have that local knowledge, they have contacts on the ground that we do not have. I don't have a number of how many foster homes we have around the province right now or how many are in those indigenous communities. I'm sure we could find that number for you.

This bill that we are bringing in, Bill 14, I think will go a long way in terms of helping us to increase the number of foster homes that are out

there through this licensing piece we are doing that you spoke about earlier. That will be going out and having somebody that would be focused on just that one thing, because when we think about the social workers in our offices today and all the competing demands on them and they're very busy, they're not focused on one area. If you get focused and you only deal with one area you could become an expert pretty fast in that field. So hopefully we're going to see positive results from that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, I'm right now to clauses 71 to 87. So some questions around the agency piece in terms of recruiting foster homes.

In the briefing we were told that the department will be implementing a regulatory regime to allow non-government entities to licence the foster homes.

My first question would be: When will those regulations be available? Another question is: What standards will these licensing entities have to follow? What will be the reporting expectations? When it comes to safety and inspections, what do you anticipate some of the regulations will be there?

I have more questions, but I won't ask too many at a time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I sat down without answering one earlier question that the Member had. It is possible for a child to be placed with a family member or significant other outside the province, but that is something we would work out an agreement with very closely with the indigenous organization if that child was indigenous or something like that.

The question about the rules and the regulations; well, we are taking 12 months to put all of that in place. I can tell you, to bring everyone in the

House back to what we're talking about here today, we're talking about the safety and the well-being of children and youth that are in our care, and their protection is paramount.

We know we're not dealing with a restaurant down the road, we're talking about children in care. The standard will be very, very high. It will be transparent, and the monitoring – whoever we go out and develop an agreement with, the monitoring will always rest with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Is the decision to allow agencies to recruit foster homes expected to result in more foster home availability as opposed to having government recruit foster homes directly?

Another question related to the agencies is: Will these agencies receive any payment or financial incentive to recruit foster homes?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to say to the Member opposite that social workers will continue to carry out the task of recruitment; they will still do what they can. The work that we will be reaching out and doing with the licensing regime – that will complement, that will add to. The social workers will still continue to do that work.

We recently had a pilot program with Key Assets, I believe, for example, Mr. Chair. Indications came back in the very early days of that pilot showing us that we were on the right road. Monetary and efficiently is not the primary thing, but it showed efficiencies that way early signs. It was the most cost effective way for government, in terms of taxpayers' dollars, around the province.

It is absolutely the best for the child to be placed. If they cannot be with mom or a family member, foster care is better for them than the ILAs or the group homes and things like that.

We did a little pilot; we have an enabling clause here now that will allow us to extend beyond the pilot with the work we've done. We're pretty excited about that because the feedback has been good.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're getting there. In terms of the pilot then, what types of payments or financial incentives were offered to the agencies during the pilot phase?

CHAIR: The Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said earlier, we work out an agreement and a dollar figure. To my knowledge, there is no incentive based on numbers. That would be like a commission kind of thing. I'm not sure what the Member is referring to.

With the pilot, there was an agreement that was put in place and an amount that was reached. They carried out the work, and so far the results of the work they're doing have been very favourable.

CHAIR: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: So as this moves beyond the pilot stage and into being open to, I guess, all agencies, will there be a standard payment system or will you negotiate different rates with different agencies? That will be my first question. My other question is: What insurances will the agencies have to hold?

So to recap my first question: Will there be a standard payment mechanism or will they have individual agreements with different agencies? What insurance will the agencies have to hold with respect to liabilities?

Clause 79 allows a manager or social worker to act as an inspector for the purpose of this act. Will the inspector be the same social worker

who has the child or youth on their caseload, or will this be a different independent person?

Another question is: How often will investigations take place? Will inspection reports be made public? Will they be subject to ATIPP regulations with identifying information removed?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: The Member asked a lot of questions there, Mr. Chair. I'm certain I'm not going to hit every one this time. I may have to sit down, given it's getting late in the day; we started early. I'll do my best.

Around the cost piece, what I wanted to say is that we will have regulations on the rate of pay, the method, the time and the manner of payment. It's not a secret that some of the independent living arrangements that we have out there around the province now could be very, very expensive, like over \$300,000 a child. The work we did with our pilot, Key Assets, that cost was significantly less, around \$150,000, around \$175,000 for the child.

What I want to say about the workload of the social workers – I think you might have asked a question about that – is we have this ratio in place: one in 22. There are certain areas around the province where we continue to be challenged with that workload, in Labrador in particular.

Mr. Chair, there are a whole lot of things happening to try and bring in extra supports. We just recently went over and met with the students at the School of Social Work; we did 12 interviews as a result of that. We have a team of social workers that fly in and out of Natuashish, for example. We are ready to bring another team in, because we've got a heavy workload there right now and we will deploy those social workers to where they're needed in those communities.

So there's always ongoing recruitment, retention efforts and we have been trying to be really creative, given some of the challenges in that area.

I know that there are more questions, so I'll sit down and I'll wait – I don't think I hit them all.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry, Minister, I do realize I included a lot of questions in that round. One of the questions that I had asked was: What insurances will the agencies be required to have? And if you have any indication at this point in time as to how often investigations would be required to take place in the case of outside agencies doing the placement.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Social workers do investigations whenever necessary, but I want to say those children and youth that are in our care and on our list, there is ongoing, all the time, contact between the social workers and those children and youth. They do also go into the homes and carry out inspections as well.

Around the confidentiality piece, as Members will know, the current act from 2011 was because of privacy concerns of children and youth. The privacy of that act overrides the ATIPPA and that will be the exact same thing with this bill, Bill 14. It will not be subject to ATIPPA, as you can appreciate, because of the very nature of the work that's involved here.

Insurances will be covered under the regulations, I say to the Member.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Can the minister tell us how many staff are currently engaged today in recruitment and investigations, and if you think additional resources are going to be required in the future?

I guess this question is a bit more general: Why was the decision to set up a regulatory

framework to allow non-government entities to license foster homes made, in terms of your rationale for moving outside of government staff to use non-government entities?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Two things – around the recruitment and retention, I've been there for about 10 months now and I've really seen a team effort around the recruitment and retention. We get in that boardroom, a dozen of us, and we try to figure out where we can go next. We do jurisdictional scans, we look at other Northern areas and what they're doing and we have had to be very creative, as the Member for Torngat knows some of the work that we're doing up in his area.

I will say recruitment and retention – all staff can do that, all staff with their contacts, no matter where they are. What was the other question? Why did we go down the road of licensing? There has been tremendous need. We've had children out in independent living arrangements. That is not the most ideal setting for a child if you are in a home that is being rented and you have the staff that come and go for 12-hour shifts and things like that. Sometimes we find ourselves in that circumstance because we have children that have very complex needs.

My colleague, the Minister of Health, has been doing a tremendous amount of work around *Towards Recovery*, mental health, addictions. We hear about things like the opioid crisis and things like that. I realized sitting here in the House one day that many of the parents – many of the young adults that the Minister of Health would be working with on various files, we have their children in the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

We've seen an increase – the number of children coming in and going out of care has remained relatively stable. I want to make that point here before the House. When we look back over the last number of years, the number coming in, the number going out has remained relatively stable, but we've certainly seen an increase in the complexities of the children that come in.

I mentioned earlier today years ago foster parents, often one parent in that home, stayed home so they could take in a couple of children. Now, most people, there are two parents that work. We have been really hard-pressed to find the number of foster homes that's needed. Based on our consultations, based on our dialogue that we've had with indigenous groups, various agencies and organizations, we felt right now that this was the best road for us to go down.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Minister.

Just two more questions on these clauses and regulations. Are there any agencies who have expressed a concern about getting licences to recruit foster homes? Also, on the flipside of that, are there any agencies who have expressed an interest in getting involved in the business and becoming a recruiter of foster homes? Have you had people express concerns on both sides, I guess?

As well, if an incident takes place in a foster home that is licensed by a non-governmental entity, who will be responsible, the licensee or government?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, when we work with those third-party agencies, we put agreements in place. There are standards that they have to comply with, the highest of standards because we're dealing with children and youth in care. I would say, Mr. Chair, when we become aware, if an agency is breaching a part of that agreement, then we would be in there and we would have no choice but to take action if that was the case.

I may have missed a question. I'll let the Member ask again.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Minister.

That was good information, but in terms of if an accident actually took place in the home that's licensed by the non-government entity, who would be liable, the licensee or government? Where would the liability be?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So while we're out, we're going to develop agreements with some of these agents to help us in the recruitment and retention and things like that of more homes. We are responsible. The responsibility always rests with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, with the social worker to do due diligence.

As I said earlier today, I've been out in about a dozen offices around the province; they are professional in their field. They have a lot of clinical supports to help them carry out their assessments and base their decisions on. In addition to that, they work in a team setting and they're constantly doing their case file follow-up and things like that to always ensure that the child or youth in our care is safe.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Final question on licensing agencies: Have you consulted with the union about the fact that you will be using outside agencies as well as government employees for this service?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can tell the Member that the Human Resource Secretariat has certainly discussed this issue with the union, prior to this bill coming to the floor of the House of Assembly. I also want to say, on this topic, that we will not be cutting social work positions. That is not the intent here. There's a tremendous need. Social workers are out there, they have a very heavy workload. We will not be cutting social workers through the establishment of agencies and family-based or residential-placement operators.

Mr. Chair, what we're talking about here by developing those agreements with third-party agencies, helping us increase the number of foster homes we need and things like that, this will allow our social workers to have more opportunity to focus on the very valuable work that they do, which will provide better outcomes for the children and youth.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You'll be saying that in your sleep tonight.

Clause 88, Youth Services Agreement, question – this new bill makes a number of changes relating to how a youth is treated based on their age. This bill will take a year to implement. So during the interim period for the next 12 months or the period between Royal Assent and when you have to get the regulations in place, how would the youth be treated? Which set of rules will apply? And does this mean that youth will not be able to stay in care if they are not in educational programs now, even if staying in care would be to their benefit? Will we have some children that will fall through the cracks during this time or can the new rules apply immediately to the children who are going to age out of services?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Senior and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, we will be working with youth within the legislation and we will certainly – while this will take 12 months, this is a very substantive piece of legislation here. It's a pretty thick bill, so it's going to take us about 12 months to work through some of the policies and the regulations. During the interim, during the 12 months that the Member is asking about, we will work with any youth that comes forward seeking our services, for sure.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Minister.

Clause 94, disclosure of information; this clause outlines when a director or manager may authorize the disclosure of information without consent. This would only be done, of course, in the best interest of the child or youth for case planning purposes. There would be disclosure permitted to indigenous representatives for case planning purposes, research and evaluation, criminal proceedings or investigations.

My question there is: Has the Privacy Commissioner been consulted on this clause? What were the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, you're getting tired. I know you're an early riser so it's probably your bedtime after 9 at night. Bear with us, we're working through this. That's on record now.

Yes, certainly, I can say to the Member that the Privacy Commissioner has been consulted on the information-sharing provision. We have made revisions based on his feedback and there is no issue right now with anything.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's the 100 clauses in the bill that's keeping us here so long. It's a very important bill and a very valuable bill, so I'm certainly enjoying the information exchange, Minister. Thank you very much.

Clause 95 speaks to information-sharing agreements. This clause will allow government to enter into information-sharing agreements with indigenous governments or organizations.

My question under this clause is: What safeguards will be in place to protect information when it leaves government and is given to an indigenous government?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, there are circumstances now where some of that information is being shared when it is necessary to ensure the safety of a child. Some of that is happening. What we have done here with this bill, sometimes you have certain pieces of legislation or parts of the act, like the 2011 act, that might have been open to interpretation depending on the person reading it. This has just provided some clarity around that. Again, I cannot stress that the highest measures of accountability and mechanism will be in place.

Mr. Chair, the staff that work in Children, Seniors and Social Development, yes, we have some new social workers on staff, but many people in that department have been around 25 years and more doing this really valuable work. We all know some of the really sad stories, some of the circumstances, some of the reports that have been released. Those were all moments that allowed us to build upon, lessons learned, sometimes tough lessons, sometimes maybe many things out of our control.

It's because of all of those stories, circumstances and situations that there are a lot of checks and balances in place just because we are dealing with the lives of children and youth in our province.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, Minister.

Clause 105 speaks to Delegation. Are there any discussions ongoing now, presently, with indigenous governments that want to transition these services into their responsibility? Can the minister outline how she envisions all of this to occur, and which services do you anticipate would most likely be delegated?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, when you look across the country at other jurisdictions, different provinces have different things happening between the departments and the indigenous groups and organizations.

What we have done here – I will say to the Member, to date there's no discussion on this. What this bill is doing, Bill 14, is there will be an enabling clause so that if some indigenous organization were to come forward and say we want to be responsible for providing this service regarding our own children and youth, they would be able to do that.

We work really closely with our indigenous governments and organizations. We really, really value that relationship. We have things like the Innu round table, we have a working relationship agreement. We already have a lot of things happening across our department, our social workers and those. So if they reach a time where they feel they want to maybe even take a tiny chunk of that and take that on and try it, then we will work with them through that process, but as of right now that discussion isn't happening.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have a few questions now with respect to implementation. We talked a lot today about we're anticipating it will be approximately a year before the legislation is implemented after it receives Royal Assent.

What is the minister's target date for the implementation of this legislation? What steps must the department take before it is ready to implement? My final question is: How will the long implantation period impact children or youth who are in care or receiving services?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said earlier today, this will take one year. There will be a tremendous amount of work that will have to happen. All of our hundreds of social workers will receive training.

Mr. Chair, we can't rush this. We really have to get this right because of the nature of the work they do. While we are working our way through that process of Bill 14 with all of the substantive

changes, I want to say to the Member that what will happen to the children today is they will continue to receive the best care possible because the protection of children and youth in our care is a core value with us, as I'm sure it is for all Members in this House. That won't change.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just rose this time to say thank you, Minister.

A lot of times in this hon. House people look at us and say: What are they at in there? Well, this is the type of good work that we do as parliamentarians; a very important piece of legislation.

Thank you, as well, to your staff who've done incredible work here, and to all the people who care for our children.

Thank you, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: I won't repeat anything that's been said already this evening, but I cannot sit down without tossing another bouquet to the staff in the department who have worked tremendously hard, to the legislative writers, that's a pretty massive piece, and thanks to everyone who participated today in helping us get Bill 14 to where it is.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 133 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 133 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 133, carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CHAIR: An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Families.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, 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 Bill 14.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 15.

Shall the motion carry?

CLERK: Bill 14.

MR. A. PARSONS: Bill 14.

CHAIR: Fourteen; I'm sorry.

The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 14.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 14 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 14 without amendment.

When shall the report be received? Now?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, given the hour of the day, I was going to have the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands second my motion but what I'll do instead is have the Member for Virginia Waters second my motion to adjourn.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 o'clock in the morning.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.