



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLIX

FIRST SESSION

Number 12

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

Monday

November 4, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

Madam Clerk, Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has arrived.

CLERK (Barnes): Admit Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(The Lieutenant-Governor takes the Speaker's Chair.)

It is the wish of Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor that all present be seated.

CLERK: Members of the House of Assembly:

On September 6, 2019, I received notice of resignation as Speaker of this Assembly from Mr. Perry Trimper, Member for the District of Lake Melville. In accordance with the Standing Orders, I advised all Members of the House of Assembly of the vacancy in the Office of the Speaker.

I have a Proclamation from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor:

TO: Sandra Barnes, Clerk of the House of Assembly and Elizabeth Murphy, Clerk Assistant of the House of Assembly

GREETING;

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS by a letter of resignation addressed to the Clerk of the House of Assembly, the Honourable Perry Trimper vacated the position of Speaker of the House of Assembly on September 6, 2019;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient to call together the 49th General Assembly on the said day for the Members of the House of Assembly to proceed to their choice of Speaker;

NOW THEREFORE I, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, do authorize and direct you, the said Sandra Barnes and Elizabeth Murphy, or either of you,

to signify to the Members of the said House of Assembly to assemble for the dispatch of business on Monday, November 4, 2019, at 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon, and that it is my pleasure that they should proceed to choose some person to be their Speaker and to present such person on that day for my approbation.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Sergeant-at-Arms escorts Their Honours from the Chamber.)

CLERK: Please be seated.

At the close of nominations for the Office of the Speaker at 4:30 p.m., Friday, November 1, 2019, two candidates put their names forward. The candidates, in alphabetical order, are Mr. Scott Reid and Mr. Perry Trimper.

Members of the House of Assembly, pursuant to the Lieutenant-Governor's direction and the Standing Orders of this Assembly, it is my duty to call upon you to elect a Member to preside over your deliberations as Speaker.

Would the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Pages please make sure the voting booth and ballot box are in position?

Before we begin the election procedure, I will briefly outline the process that will be followed as set out in the Standing Orders of the House. For each round of balloting, Members are asked to proceed starting from the back or third row of desks on their respective sides of the House, file past the Speaker's Chair to the head of the Clerk's Table. At the Table, each Member will be given a ballot and asked to initial a list to verify that they have received it. Once you have received your ballot, please proceed to the voting booth which is located on the Sergeant-at-Arms's desk.

In the voting booth, please mark your ballot with an X next to the name of the candidate you support, then proceed to the ballot box, which is located at the end of the Clerk's Table, deposit your ballot and return to your place. When all Members wishing to vote have done so, the House will recess while the Table Officers withdraw to count the vote. A simple majority of the votes cast is required to elect the Speaker. If

the candidates receive the same number of votes, there will be another ballot.

Immediately before the start of the second or any subsequent ballot, a Member who wishes to withdraw will be given an opportunity to do so. When the count of each ballot is completed, a five-minute bell will ring to call Members to the Chamber. In preparation for the vote, I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to inspect and lock the ballot box.

We will now proceed with the voting procedure. Starting from the back or third row of seating on each side of the House, those Members who wish to cast a ballot should now proceed to either side of the head of the Clerk's Table.

As all Members present in the House of Assembly have voted, the House will now recess to the call of the bells while the Clerks at the Table count the ballots. The bells will ring for five minutes to recall Members to the Chamber when the results of the first ballot will be announced.

Thank you very much.

Recess

CLERK: Members of the House of Assembly, further to suborder 4(11) of the Standing Orders, I declare Mr. Scott Reid, Member for the District of St. George's - Humber, elected as Speaker for the remainder of the 49th General Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

(The Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition lead (drag) the new Speaker to the Speaker's Chair. The Premier and Leader of the Official Opposition help the new Speaker into his robe.)

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): It's a great honour to be in this position.

It's tradition, as a new Speaker is brought into the House, that we resist being brought in. It's an old tradition from British history when a Speaker would be directed by the House to send a message to the King. He'd go see the King and if the King didn't agree with the message that

was being brought to him, he often sent a little note back to the House and as an exclamation mark to the note, often chopped off the Speaker's head and sent the head back to the House as well. So people resisted getting in the Speaker's Chair for that reason, and that's a tradition we have to this day.

The word Parliament comes from the French word parlay, the place where we come to talk; we talk out our differences. We do a lot of talking and a lot of speaking here, and it's important we do it in an orderly fashion. That we have rules and procedures that allow each of us – protects the right of each of us to speak and to represent the people who've elected us and sent us here.

So the rules of the House have evolved over time. We, in this House, have our Standing Orders which we look to as the main document that guides the way we order our discussions, the way we talk to each other and the way we speak to each other throughout the day. We also look at the precedents of this House, the past practice in this House, the past practices in other parliaments in Canada and other parliamentary democracies around the world to guide us in the way we conduct our affairs here in the House.

It's an important thing that we follow the rules and that we have rules that protect the rights each Member because when we do that, we protect the rights of Members to speak, we show our respect for the democratic process and we also show our respect for the people who have elected us and sent us here. The rules of the House continue to evolve, and we have to be responsive to things that are happening in a broader society, as a House, to remain relevant and to remain faithful to the principles of protecting the rights of each Member to represent their districts.

I look forward to working with you, to continue to evolve the rules of our House, to look to the traditions that we've had in the past as a guidance in the way we conduct our affairs here, and look forward to working with you all, doing the job we were sent here to do. Being Speaker is a great honour for me, and in conclusion, I just want to thank you all for giving me this responsibility.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, congratulations, first and foremost.

I move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition, that the Member for the District of Lewisporte - Twillingate be appointed Deputy Speaker for the remainder of the 49th General Assembly.

MR. CROSBIE: I second the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate be the Deputy Speaker.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has arrived.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Mr. Speaker leaves the Chair.)

(Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor takes the Chair.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor that all present be seated.

PREMIER BALL: May it please Your Honour, the House of Assembly, agreeable to your Honour's command, have proceeded to the choice of Speaker and have elected Mr. Scott Reid, the Member for the District of St. George's - Humber, to that office, and by their direction I present him for the approbation of your Honour.

HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR (Judy May Foote, PC, ONL):

On behalf of Her Majesty, I assure you of my sense of your efficiency and I do most fully approve and confirm you as Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Your Honour, having approved the choice of this House in constituting me as their Speaker, it now becomes my duty in the name of the representatives of Her Majesty's loyal subjects to ask that I, as Speaker, may have full access to Your Honour's presence at all reasonable times.

HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR: Mr. Speaker, I do confirm, on behalf of Her Majesty, that your words and actions will constantly receive the most favourable construction.

I'm going to take advantage of this opportunity, just to have a few words to say. The most important duty of a Lieutenant-Governor is to ensure there is always a responsible government in power; therefore, one of the Lieutenant-Governor's key responsibilities is the appointment of the Premier and, on her or his advice, the Members of the Cabinet who constitute the Executive Council.

There are rules governing different scenarios following a general election. The one applicable following the last provincial election stipulates: Where no party wins an outright majority in a general election but the party of the incumbent Premier, first minister, wins the largest number of seats, the conventional practice is to allow her or him to continue in office and seek the confidence of the Legislature unless she or he chooses to resign.

I have a job to do as a representative of the Crown in our province – it is non-partisan. I do not engage in political activity. I act on the advice of ministers who are Members of the government that enjoys the confidence of the Legislature. This advice is normally conveyed by the Premier who chairs Executive Council. I am available to the Premier and her or his ministers when called upon.

This House of Assembly finds itself in a position that has occurred only one other time in the province's history. The other time there was a

minority government was almost half a century ago. All forms of governance have challenges and opportunities, and none more so than a minority government. The opportunity exists to meet these challenges by working together, as was the wish of the electorate in our province six months ago when they voted in a minority government and they will hold you accountable.

I also have a role to play in highlighting democracy, which we all know is work in progress. Democracy, as we were taught in school, is a word that traces its origin back to two Greek words, the word for people and the word for rules. Rules for the people by the people. You represent the people.

Democracy can't flourish in darkness only in light, which is why I believe the cornerstone of democracy is tolerance. Tolerance for others and, in this House of Assembly where issues are debated and decisions are made that are meant to be in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, tolerance for each other.

All 40 of you have been hired to do the best job you can to ensure this province, where we all live, not only survives but prospers. You applied for a job and you were hired while others were not. There is a reason why you are here. Some of you have served before and were returned to continue to work in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador and its people. Others are here for the first time, having convinced those in the district you represent that you indeed have something to offer that will be of benefit to our province and our people. I congratulate each of you.

The trust you earn to sit in this House of Assembly comes with responsibilities, and among them, in my opinion, is the absolute necessity of being tolerant and respecting each other. In doing so, you will show respect for the people of our province who decided who will get to represent them and be stewards of this province from a governance point of view.

There is no province in our country known more for its sense of humour than ours, and there is no reason why that sense of humour cannot be evident in this House of Assembly and in your dealings with one another. There are a great

many lines that come to mind used by former representatives of people of Newfoundland and Labrador, used during Question Period and debate; some will go down in history. There's nothing like wit to tone down rhetoric and get debate back on track where the exchange becomes meaningful and of value for our province and its people.

It is important to remind yourself that just like you, your colleagues ran for public office because they believed they can make a difference. When we question that, we question those who did the hiring.

While there are witty lines I could quote from some of the well-known representatives from Newfoundland and Labrador over the years – I'm sure many of you are familiar with them – in the interest of being fair to both genders, I will share an exchange you may not have heard between Nancy Astor, the first woman to sit in the British Parliament, and Sir Winston Churchill. In the exchange, Lady Astor said to Mr. Winston Churchill: If I was your wife, I would put poison in your coffee. To which he replied: Madam, if you were my wife, I would drink it.

Not everyone comes into this House with the same level of confidence, for some of those here for the first time it can be daunting and it takes time to adjust to this environment. An exchange with a witty line that may spark one in return during Question Period or in debate and still get the point you were making across will have a much more positive impact and should result in a better working relationship.

Human beings don't take kindly to being on the receiving end of disrespectful remarks and it certainly doesn't make for a collegial working relationship. All of you deserve better, and those who hired you expect better because they deserve to have your attention focused on them and the challenges they face, not on each other.

Give and take is necessary for deal making in any situation. I encourage you to take the opportunity that you have been given to work together in the best interest of this province that we all love, and which has so much to offer.

Thank you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

We're going to proceed with routine proceedings.

First of all, in the gallery today I would like to welcome Lieutenant Colonel Stephane Racle, Commander of 5 Wing Goose Bay; and 5 Wing Goose Bay Honorary Colonel Geoff Goodyear.

Also in the gallery, I would like to recognize Tom Badcock, Executive Director of Help Us Build, joining us today for a Member's statement. As well as a crew member of the *MV Flanders* visiting us this afternoon for a Ministerial Statement.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have Members' statements from the hon. Members for the District of Lewisporte - Twillingate, Ferryland, Labrador West, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and Harbour Main.

The Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations, I look forward to working with you as Deputy Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Twillingate Volunteer Fire Department. The 30-member department is very active in the community, taking an active part in community events and running a vigorous training program and fire prevention initiatives.

Over the past year they responded to 31 calls, ranging from home fires, vehicle accidents, missing persons and other emergencies. On November 2, I had the honour of being the guest speaker for their annual banquet and awards ceremony.

Fire Chief Craig Clarke, Captain Jim Hull and Robert Ings each received 100 per cent attendance, and long-time service awards were presented to Corey Rogers for five years service, Jerry Ings, 15 years and Deputy Chief Perry Cooper for 35 years service.

Firefighter Alex Baggs was presented with the prestigious Firefighter of the Year, while Robert Ings took home the Willie Cooper Memorial Award.

Mr. Speaker, volunteer firefighters and first responders play a vital role in protecting our residents and communities. I ask all Members to join me in thanking the Twillingate Volunteer Fire Department for their devoted service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations.

I rise today to recognize the recent passing of a constituent from my district. Leo Puddester passed away May 2, 2019. Leo was a resident of Bay Bulls, a folklore legend in Newfoundland and Labrador and former president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees.

He first joined NAPE in 1968 as a correctional officer. Within weeks he became shop steward for his local and eventually became local president. He would go on to represent correctional officers on NAPE's board of directors and served as eastern vice-president. In 1983, he became union staff, serving as employee relations officer and senior negotiator, a position he held up until 2003 when he was elected president of NAPE.

Leo was acknowledged in Newfoundland and Labrador because of his involvement with NAPE and Unicorn Promotions. Leo will certainly be remembered due to his involvement with both. He will also be remembered for his stylish wardrobe and colourful personality. He was also very well known for his toughness in the hockey world and he brought that to his tough negotiations with NAPE.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues in this House to join me in honouring the life of Leo Puddester and the contribution he made to our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: I am proud today to recognize Darrell Brenton, former mayor and community activist of Labrador City.

A celebrated public servant, Mr. Brenton has served on council since 1981. He was the longest serving mayor of Labrador City, holding the position from 1989 to 2001.

Darrell is a long-time member of the Lions Club and is renowned for his community service. He's a volunteer with the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and many more. From calling bingo to selling tickets in the mall for local charities, his work in Labrador West is never ending.

This past spring, Darrell was made a Labradorian of Distinction for all his contributions to Labrador and Labrador West and its residents.

Mr. Brenton's reputation for volunteerism precedes him. If you mention his name to anyone in Labrador West, his long list of community involvements are the first things that are brought up. His love of Labrador West shines through.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Mr. Brenton for his years of service to Labrador West.

Thank you.

SOME. HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, The HUB, or Help Us Build group, has been a long-standing, non-profit organization in the great District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. The HUB provides fabulous

services, accessible programs and support for the differently abled community.

In the building that was formerly St. George's school, The HUB has been an established non-profit in our district since 1975. Hallmarks of this organization are their fantastic print shop which offers services for design, scanning, printing and publishing. Likewise, they offer phenomenal catering services providing diverse and delicious menus. These programs support The HUB and its many social programs.

The members of The HUB enjoy accessible card and dart leagues. They offer summer barbecues, dances and outings for the differently abled community. The board of directors and president, Jim Kelly, are volunteers.

I ask the hon. Members to join me in thanking them for all their hard work and The HUB for their excellent work in our community.

SOME. HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It is an honour for me to rise today to speak to a true champion from the District of Harbour Main.

Shailynn Snow grew up in Clarke's Beach. At age two, her pop, Ernie Mugford, took her every day to the parent-and-tot skate. At the age of five, she began playing in numerous girls and boys hockey leagues. While completing her grade 10, 11 and 12 education, she attended Ridley College in Ontario on a scholarship. She played in the Junior Women's League and won many awards and was named female athlete of the year.

In May 2018, she was successful in making the cut for the Team Canada Under-18 Team. They won gold in January 2019 in Obihiro, Japan.

Shailynn is presently attending her first year university at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York on a four year full scholarship. Her goal is to make the Olympic team.

Please join me in saluting our world champion, Shailynn Snow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I joined Skills Canada Newfoundland and Labrador for the launch of the National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. This annual event celebrates the successes of skilled workers while promoting careers in skilled trades and technology as first-choice options for our youth.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, our government has provided \$178,000 to Skills Canada Newfoundland and Labrador to offer a new program called Skilled Futures.

Skilled Futures features a series of interactive workshops for intermediate and secondary students, offering them hands-on experience, connections with mentors, and information on specific post-secondary programs. It is also placing a focus on a wide variety of sectors such as health sciences, paramedicine, aviation and agriculture and forestry.

Mr. Speaker, Skilled Futures is offered province-wide and is part of our focus under the Education Action Plan on Career and Co-operative Education. Through this program we are promoting a whole-school approach to exploring career education through experiential learning in communities.

I invite my hon. colleagues to join me in wishing Skills Canada Newfoundland and Labrador a successful Skilled Trades and Technology Week and to encourage students to participate in the new Skilled Futures Program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus would like to join the hon. minister in offering thanks and congratulations to Skills Canada Newfoundland and Labrador on their new program, Skilled Futures.

Mr. Speaker, recent employment trends indicate there will be thousands of skilled labour vacancies across the country in the next decade as people retire. Recently, we attended the Canadian Parliamentary Association in Victoria, BC where we heard the Rear Admiral of the Pacific Fleet state such. We need to prepare our students to meet these opportunities as they consider employment paths now for their future.

Skilled Futures will offer hands-on experience through interactive workshops, mentorship and information on a diverse range of industries. As a former teacher and administrator, myself, I know first-hand the value of practical hands-on experience for teachers and students. There is perhaps no better method to peak curiosity and interest in a given field.

In closing, I ask all hon. Members of the House to join me in congratulating Skills Canada Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Anytime a government is investing in youth and our education system is a good idea and is always welcome. However, any project such as this is going to need people at the school level to make it work. It's going to need

teachers, and I would be interested in discussing with the minister who at the school level will be responsible for the coordination of the program and if there will be sufficient allocation of teaching resources to make this work.

Thank you.

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today with great pride to honour the crew of the *MV Flanders*.

On the evening of July 9, the *Flanders* and its crew were in Portugal Cove when they received a call from the Canadian Coast Guard requesting assistance. Two men were in distress in Conception Bay after their watercraft they were operating overturned. The vessel departed within minutes and with general location of where to search and assistance from the Coast Guard the men were located a short time after.

Crew members used a marshaling boat to get the vessel to the two men and pull them from the frigid water. Finally, once aboard the *Flanders*, they received first-aid before the vessel returned to Portugal Cove where they were treated by paramedics.

When the crew received the call from the Coast Guard, they responded immediately, and darkness was setting in when they pulled the men from the water.

Mr. Speaker, crews in our provincial ferries often go above and beyond the call of duty, and I don't want to think about what could have happened had the crew not responded quickly that evening.

On behalf of the hon. Members of this House and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I extend my congratulations to the heroes on board the *MV Flanders* for their actions that evening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, join all Members in thanking the crew of the *Flanders* for their heroic efforts on July 9.

Mr. Speaker, for centuries Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have made their living from the sea. Sadly, stories of tragedy and loss have so frequently broken the hearts of families and communities around our province. Thankfully, because of the quick actions of the crew of the *Flanders*, another tragic event was averted.

The employees of the provincial government often go above and beyond every day to serve their fellow citizens; however, rarely does it test the individual bravery and courage such as the night of July 9.

Mr. Speaker, all Members of our caucus join the minister in recognizing and thanking the crew. I am also glad to note that one of those rescued was a nephew of the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis, my colleague, who is particularly grateful for the efforts of the crew of the *Flanders*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: I would like to thank the minister of an advance copy of his statement. I join the hon. Members in expressing congratulations and thank the crew of the *MV Flanders* for their professionalism, quick thinking and response to the Coast Guards call for assistance and coming to the rescue for those two gentlemen of the public who were in distress.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations once again.

Can the Premier inform the House if Prime Minister Trudeau replied to the Premier's letter asking for his position on issues affecting the province prior to election day?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we have said that we would make the letters that would have come back from the questions we sent to all federal leaders and we received two – one, as we've mentioned, has been put out publicly.

Mr. Speaker, much of the questions that were in the prime minister's letter were things that we were already working on and we continue to have that dialogue with the prime minister at this stage.

There were two letters of response from the leaders that we requested the information on based on the priorities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I draw from that that answer is no, the Premier did not receive a reply from the prime minister prior to election day.

How does that affect the Premier's level of confidence in whether or not the present minority government in Ottawa will deliver on promises made?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, number one, one of the major priorities that we would've seen would have been on rate mitigation. Going into the election, I made that quite clear that the communication meetings would continue during the election writ period. Those meetings have occurred. That was a number one priority for people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at the responses that were received, they were varying. But, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you now that I've had conversations since the election, already, with the prime minister. I've had conversations with premiers all across this country. The agenda for Newfoundland and Labrador will continue as it was prior to the federal election. It will continue on.

And we will work with Ottawa – we will work with all federal parties, for that matter, Mr. Speaker, because what's important is that we get the priority issues facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians addressed in Ottawa.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the Premier for his statement. I understand that he's going to table those letters, and I look forward hopefully to seeing those tabled this week. Thank you.

Our most pressing financial problem in Newfoundland and Labrador is rate mitigation for the Muskrat Falls Project. Full power will be delivered in about a year's time.

What commitment to help with rates did the Premier's low-key approach to the federal election bring from any federal party?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, number one, addressing the letters. The letters that Mr. Singh had put out were publicly available. I'm assuming, since you campaigned with him, that Mr. Scheer would've spoken to you about those letters as well, because they were publicly available. So we can table those, we can just print them off, Mr. Speaker, and

table them for you. We'd be more than happy to do that.

There is no question rate mitigation – as a result of, by the way, not a decision of this government, but the administration that you are leading, or the PC Party that you are leading, which caused the necessity for rate mitigation. Let's not forget that. A project that you, to this day, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, fails to even say it was a mistake.

Mr. Speaker, we put out a rate mitigation plan that was very clear to the people of this province. The rate mitigation from the Leader of the Opposition is still missing \$150 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: That was a kind of convoluted answer to the question, and I have a pretty strong idea that the electorate in this province is getting tired, after two elections now, of hearing the same old accusations.

I take it that the Premier obtained, in fact, no commitment on Muskrat rate mitigation from any federal party leader.

Why didn't the Premier use the leverage he had during a close election in which every seat counted and make Muskrat Falls rate mitigation a federal election issue in this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, speaking of low key during the federal election, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition here in working in collaboration – keep in mind, this is supposed to be a collaborative House of Assembly working on behalf of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I didn't hear much from the Leader of the Opposition that he raised on this issue.

I will tell you, though, that in September prior to the election we did meet with Minister Morneau. That was publicly available. We made that

information public that we would continue to have discussions around rate mitigation, Mr. Speaker.

It's serious; it's the number one priority for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that has been caused by a project that has seen significant overruns for the people of our province. Mr. Speaker, that's the reason why we're having this discussion, a project that leads to 30 per cent of the debt of this province.

Whose administration made those choices, I ask the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, last week I went to Sheshatshiu and met with Chief Hart regarding the suicide crisis. The government has provided additional counselling resources and we support that effort.

I'd like to ask the minister: Will those counselling resources be allocated to Sheshatshiu on a permanent basis to ensure long-term solutions for this crisis?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the people of our province, and throughout our province no matter where you live, has been impacted by the situation in Sheshatshiu. I've had conversations with the chief just about every day. Even this morning I've had conversations about the situation that's in Sheshatshiu. I've made it well known to the chief and others that if my services are needed there, I will go. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that.

Secondly, we were very quick to respond by putting resources on the ground, Mr. Speaker. There's security now that's been in place. The conversations are happening every day. What we've put in place, number one, is to deal with the current situation and then let's provide the necessary long-term solutions that will be required in a community like Sheshatshiu.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you.

We support your effort with this crisis, but it shouldn't take a crisis or fatalities to spur such action.

I ask the minister: Has the government been responsive enough to the needs expressed by Indigenous leaders in the many years and months leading up to this?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question. It has been a difficult situation for the community, distressing for all concerned.

The Member opposite's question is best addressed through the All-Party Committee and the response through the action plan. We have consulted widely with Indigenous communities, both in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, as well as with NunatuKavut and the Nunatsiavut Government.

We are trying to craft, in the realm of mental health, a culturally appropriate system that meets their needs and is designed to their specifications. We continue to be engaged in regular discussions with them, and the undertaking we have is to provide them with what they need, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Labrador Indigenous leaders have repeatedly said that children being removed from their communities and placed in the foster care system are losing touch with their traditional culture and traditions. When they return home they often feel alienation and isolation. This leads to a sense of helplessness and anger.

I ask: Is the Premier prepared to allocate adequate resources that supports and ensure children in care can remain in their communities?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me begin by saying my department, too, was very saddened by what was happening and what has been happening in Sheshatshiu. As this hon. House would know, we have a lot of resources that are in Sheshatshiu and my department, under child welfare in particular, we work very closely with all of the Indigenous groups in this province.

Recently, this House would know, in May '18 we brought in a very progressive piece of legislation, a substantive bill proclaimed this year, Mr. Speaker, on the 28th of June. There are a lot of things in that, after extensive consultation with Indigenous groups, that they look very favourably upon. Things like a cultural connection plan, working with family connections to keep with an elevated focus on keeping children in their communities, and we'll continue to work collaboratively, Mr. Speaker, with the Indigenous communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, people on the South Coast and across the province are extremely concerned about the salmon die-off incident and how the minister has mishandled this situation.

Minister, you were made aware of the die-off on September 3. What did you do on that very day to look after the best interest of the people from the Coast of Bays?

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

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

Thank you to the hon. Member for his question in the House, and it's the first day of the sitting of the Assembly.

On the very first day, our veterinarians and our technical people within the Fisheries and Aquaculture branch were engaged. Not only did we engage our veterinarians to begin the process of analyzing what the potential causes, cause or causes could have been, but we also communicated directly to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensure they had knowledge of the events that were reported to us. They, again, of course, invoked their own practices and procedures that would involve health of wild fish stocks, habitat, consequences from ocean pollution, as well, any impacts on migratory birds under their federal jurisdiction.

I can assure the hon. House and this Member that provincial government resources were enacted immediately, as soon as we became aware of a potentially serious situation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we heard nothing from the minister for three weeks after September 3 when he first knew about the salmon die-off. He failed to take charge of the situation, and he didn't even personally visit the area for six weeks.

Minister: On what date were the inspectors for this assessment of the die-off, and who do those inspectors answer to?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, from an aquatic fish health perspective, our veterinarians and our other technical officials were on site within 24 hours after becoming aware. We began sampling. There were some weather issues, I will concede, that impacted the capacity to be able to review sites. Hurricane Dorian was on our doorsteps at the time.

I would remind the hon. Member, if he's suggesting there was an improper course of action, he'll have to reflect on the fact that it was a formal decision that was taken by a Progressive Conservative government in the past, between 2012 and 2014 – a formal decision – not to disclose events that unfolded in aquaculture sites. In fact, 4 million fish perished between 2012 and 2014 – 4 million in seven separate incidences, and that was a formal decision that was taken. That was unacceptable to me, Mr. Speaker. That's why we revised the rules over proactive disclosure, and they are now in effect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am sure the minister is aware that he is being criticized for not being transparent and casting a blame in every direction, instead of taking a leadership role. The people have no confidence in you, Mr. Minister.

Why should the people on the South Coast and the province believe you are doing everything possible to ensure that this doesn't happen again?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, when 4 million fish perished between 2012 and 2014 on seven separate incidences, I can reflect that the hon. Member will not want to reflect on that and say that was his administration; however, there was a formal decision that was taken by the previous administration not to disclose. The companies became aware of that, became reliant on it, and it did impact in some respects.

However, as the Privacy Commissioner has said himself to me in my conversation with him, using the ATIPPA, using the fact that there was an active investigation, noting there was an active investigation as to whether or not it should be disclosed, noting that ATIPPA, under 31(1)(a), specifically states that where a

potential harm could happen towards an active investigation, discretion can indeed be used, and that is good practice.

I reflect on the hon. Member that why did he and his former government not change any rules. The rules I was initially following in 2017 were his rules, and I knew they had to be changed and they're changed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I had interesting conversations on the South Coast. According to people down there in all parts of the industry, the worst job that was ever done on this is by you, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Other groups and politicians have been silent on this issue – the federal minister, Newfoundland and Labrador MPs – and you're quick to throwing them under the bus in the media, yet months ago you bragged about your cozy relationship.

Minister, who are you reaching out to in the federal government and, tell us, who's ignoring you?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I take with great concern what the Member was saying about who trusts who. I'll reflect on the fact that we have a fantastic Member from the Connaigre Peninsula sitting now in this caucus. The trust is where it needs to be, and we have established that trust because we have been acting with the Coast of Bays area for quite some time. They were directly involved in our consultations and our new regulations that we put in place.

But the hon. Member does speak truth to one point, which is the federal government does indeed have a significant role, as established under our memorandum of understanding

between Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador on aquaculture which was drafted by former Premier Brian Peckford and John Crosbie. That memorandum of understanding states very clearly that all issues surrounding wild fish stocks, fish habitat, migratory birds and ocean pollution are indeed a federal responsibility.

And I was not shy in any respect to make sure that not only did the federal government know their responsibilities, that the situation was unfolding down there, but encouraged others – encouraged others – to encourage them to get out –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

MR. BYRNE: – and I heard nothing from that hon. Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible) this province has not, obviously, reached out to his federal counterparts or his MPs – shameful.

Can the minister confirm what employment supports will be available for workers in the industry affected by this incident?

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

MR. BYRNE: The preamble to the question is incorrect, Mr. Speaker. I have reached out directly, not only to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada but to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada. We have directed specific inquiries to the federal officials, both in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canadian Wildlife Service and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

We are prepared to share information wherever available. The lead investigator now – and there will be a determination. If there is any consequence to wild fish stocks, to fish habitat, any consequence from ocean pollution, dumping or to migratory birds, it will be a federal

decision, a federal charge that will be laid. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I hope the federal officials have done their work; we've encouraged them to do so.

The answer to the question: Will there be support? This side of the House will always be there to support workers in need and we will be there on the South Coast.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Interesting answer. He said he's reaching out, but they're still ignoring him. Why aren't they answering your questions then if you're reaching out?

Mr. Speaker, fish harvesters on the South Coast are concerned about the incident and the environmental impacts it has on other stocks such as lobster.

Minister, what are you doing to make sure that the fish harvesters' concerns are being addressed?

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

MR. BYRNE: I will repeat again: We have reached out past, present and future. We continue to have a dialogue with the federal ministers, departments and officials. We will always be having a dialogue.

We will expect them to act in their responsibilities. Their responsibilities include – and this is very well mapped out within the Canada-Newfoundland Memorandum of Understanding on Aquaculture Development, which was signed in 1988. It's mapped out in the federal *Fisheries Act*. It's mapped out in the *Environmental Protection Act*. It's mapped out in the Canada Shipping Act. It's mapped out in the Migratory Birds Convention Act. It is a federal responsibility to do those certain activities.

We have been there on the ground ever since September 3 when we've known this, to ensure that – to ask and to expect –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

MR. BYRNE: – federal authorities to be there doing their work so that if there's anything that needs to be done, they act in their jurisdiction, and if there are any charges to be laid under any of those acts or consequential regulations, they do so.

Where was the hon. Member in all of this? I heard nothing but silence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister was on VOCM for 44 minutes the other day. In that 44 minutes he mentioned "I" over 50 times. Not once did he mention the people on the South Coast.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I visited the South Coast. I went and visited everybody in this industry on the South Coast because it wasn't about me; it was about the people on the South Coast, other than the way you were handling this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Premier, do you agree that the minister's mishandling of this issue has undermined the confidence of the aquaculture industry in which it is very important to the people and the economy of our province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the debate and the to-and-fro here in the last few minutes. One of the things that I do know, however, is there are opportunities for the aquaculture industry in this province.

I've said publicly about what's happened in the last few weeks. What I would really like to know in this environment, in this session and this Assembly is how the Members really felt about this because we can make this very political if we want.

It's been a very difficult situation, but I will tell you what I'm not prepared to do is to go down to the Coast of Bays and the Connaigre Peninsula and tell people that we are shutting down the aquaculture industry. It's a significant employer in rural Newfoundland and Labrador; it's a significant exporter of protein for people all over this world.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to support the aquaculture industry in an environmentally sustainable way that will create jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is part of our vision for this province. We're going to work with this industry and work with the people in the Coast of Bays to make sure there are long-term benefits and long-term employment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with the Premier. It is a very important industry in this province and it is very important to the people on the Connaigre Peninsula – not only on the Connaigre Peninsula, all of Newfoundland and Labrador. When you look at the different spinoffs for this industry, it stretches all over this province. It's very important to our province that we support the people in that area.

My question to you is: Do you have confidence in this minister – that has bungled this like you wouldn't believe – in doing his job? If you don't, replace him.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, we select a Cabinet. If I didn't have confidence in this minister he wouldn't be there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, it's been a difficult time for the people on the South Coast of this province, but we are going to continue to grow the aquaculture industry in this province. This minister will be part of that leadership that will do that.

He is there, Mr. Speaker, with my confidence because I select this Cabinet. We now have a minister that is doing the job that he's been asked to do and we're going to continue to grow the aquaculture industry in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Exploits.

MS. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On November 29, 2018, an announcement was made by the minister of a biofuel plant that would revitalize the forest industry on the Great Northern Peninsula.

Can the minister advise the status of the Timberlands biofuel project?

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

MR. BYRNE: It's an exciting opportunity that's available to us. It's not the first time that a company has come to Newfoundland and Labrador, a foreign investor, looking to work with local interests, local companies and local stakeholders to develop our biomass.

The project is still active; the company has been reasonably slow, arguably slow, to be able to kick it off. Instead of putting millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars into a prospective project, what we've done is we've asked the company to develop a business plan. We've supplied them with timber access for a limited period of time and if they fail to perform on their conditions of licence, then they have that timber access revoked on a proportionate basis.

What we have not done, Mr. Speaker, is supply millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars on a prospective project which, quite frankly, they will be able to speak more to. What we've done is expect our entrepreneurs, our innovators, to succeed using their own capacities. That's what we hope happens here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Time for one more quick question from the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Twelve months has passed since this project was announced. No timber has been cut; no ground has been broken to build a plant. The people on the Northern Peninsula wonder if this project will happen at all.

Can the minister assure the people on the peninsula of their economic future with this project?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, the forestry sector will always be a vital and prosperous component of the economy of the Northern Peninsula. We have great hopes. We have great ambitions. We recognize this particular project does have certain risks associated with it; however, we've mitigated the risks to the taxpayer, to the government and ensured that they have a responsible accountability process as they unfold.

Yes, there is a timber permit that has been issued. They are expected to harvest in a timely basis. If they fail to harvest the timber permit, a portion of their allocation will be removed and, accordingly, the project will be revamped. We've been speaking to the company just as recently as the last few weeks. They are revising their positions based on their performance to date. We hope this still works out.

One thing, Mr. Speaker, you can be assured of, that this House can be assured of: Taxpayers' money is safe.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

MR. BYRNE: There were 15 biomass projects that were proposed under this government's watch. Fifteen of them failed. Now, Mr. Speaker, we're building a platform for success.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen 5,000 people march for action on climate change. In the offshore we have seen oil spills, worker injuries and near misses. Now, the head of the C-NLOPB is dismissing these concerns while encouraging more oil development.

I ask the Premier: How can the C-NLOPB be both a cheerleader for and an effective regulator of the oil industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't speak for the Chair of the C-NLOPB. What I do speak to will be for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

There has been billions of dollars worth of royalties that have come in from the oil industry in our province. To suggest that we shut that down today when the world is demanding some 96 million barrels of oil a day, Mr. Speaker.

The oil that we have available offshore Newfoundland and Labrador is some of the least carbon-intense oil in the world. So shutting our industry down would only mean that industry would move to somewhere else. It wouldn't be lost in the industry, it would move to more carbon-intense oil production.

We are 50 per cent better than the world average, Mr. Speaker. It's a good jurisdiction to invest in the oil industry; while we then use those royalty monies to invest in social programs like health care, like education and like infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, Northern Harvest intends to expand their Indian Head hatchery to

add 2.2 million fish to their South Coast sea pens. Government's environmental assessment excluded the open net sea pens. Groups requested a full assessment, but their concerns were dismissed and is now in a case going to court this Wednesday.

I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment: Will he restart the environmental assessment to include the sea pens instead of letting this matter go through a costly court process?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise in this House and answer the Member's question opposite. While this case in front of the courts, there will be no comment from our department until after the court proceedings later this month.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, a recent miscommunication of a luminol spill in the Churchill River, an improperly reported safety near miss at CF(L)Co, amplifies the ongoing poor communications on the part of Nalcor.

I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Will she order a complete review of incident reporting by Nalcor?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the very important question. Let me just first say regarding the luminol spill on the river, there is a river response committee, and they have done their work. There is clean up that has occurred. Anything that can't be cleaned up, I just want to let the people of the province know that luminol does no harm in the

environment and does dissipate, but there has been an active role of making sure that any clean up that is required is done.

I will say to the Member opposite, it is unfortunate and difficult to say that this spill occurred, and Nalcor, obviously, is looking at making sure that this does not occur again, because, as I've said repeatedly in this House, environmental protection is essential for all that we do in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Mr. Speaker, past government decisions have inextricably tied us to the unsustainable and volatile oil industry. A viable plan is necessary to wean the Treasury from this dependence and onto more sustainable and reliable revenue streams.

I ask the Premier: Given his intent to further entrench our reliance on offshore oil with *Advance 2030*, how does he plan to join the rest of the world and transition our economy off this dependence?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, it's called *The Way Forward*. It was released in 2016, I think on November 9. Since that time, we have seen significant investment in the aquaculture industry and the agriculture industry.

If you think about a green economy, Mr. Speaker, usually that starts with mining. Much of the components that we actually mine from the earth end up in production and producing a green economy. We've also put in place a five-year Climate Change Action Plan, Mr. Speaker. We are putting jobs in rural Newfoundland and Labrador; transforming the economy that we were.

I will tell you – and make no bones about it, as Premier of this province – if the world is looking for oil to the tune of 96 million barrels a day, we are going to use our oil industry to support green

initiatives and to support social initiatives that are so much needed in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Government Services Committee, I am pleased to present the Committee's report on the draft bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Regulation Of Real Estate Trading In The Province.

The proposed legislation was referred to the Committee on June 18, with the instruction that we review the bill and report our findings during this sitting of the House.

The Committee conducted two public hearings at which they discussed the draft bill with Service NL, the department responsible for the legislation; with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Realtors; and with one member of the general public.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank the above mentioned presenters for their contribution to our deliberations. I also acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the Committee: the Member for Conception Bay South, the vice-chair of the Committee; the Member for Ferryland; the hon. Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels; the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune; the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate; the Member for Mount Scio; and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling 15 orders-in-council related to funding pre-commitments for the fiscal years 2020, 2021 and beyond.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, Bill 8.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. Member for Mount Scio.

MS. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, that the following private Member's resolution be debated this Wednesday:

WHEREAS community organizations across the province make significant contributions in various aspects of community life, such as mental health supports, the arts, and school meal programs; and

WHEREAS the community sector is a major contributor to the province's economy; and

WHEREAS the community sector directly employs 16,000 people across the province; and

WHEREAS the Community Sector Work Plan was developed in collaboration with representatives from 17 various community

sector groups in order to advance their social and economic contributions to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS the Community Sector Council Summit stressed the importance of strengthened co-operation between government and the community sector;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House continues to work together with the Community Sector Council and its members to advance the role of the community sector groups across the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to you.

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's resolution just entered shall be the one debated on Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Heritage Collegiate in Lethbridge had a teaching position held back in May of this year for an intermediate class with an enrolment of 33 students. Fortunately, no students transferred out and a substitute teacher was assigned in September while the position was advertised for October. The result for these students was a lack of consistency and continuity which has unnecessarily negatively impacted their learning.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to request that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School

District abandon the practice of hold-back process and adhere to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's allocation formula at the end of each school year, based on the student enrolment at that time.

If I may try to encapsulate the Heritage Collegiate experience; in Clarenville Middle School they offer where children come first. It's not a competition where the first one to cross, but every decision we make ought to be based on the child and what best serves the children in our province. This practice negatively impacts the children.

May and June, at the end of a school year, is when the greatest number of teachers are available for hire. In Heritage Collegiate, on September 4 when the 33 students showed up and when they came there, they were allowed to hire a substitute teacher. The class had to be split at that point in time. A substitute teacher was hired and a permanent teacher was found for October, in a very limited pool.

The chair of the school council speaks of the havoc that was created in the school programming. Keep in mind, the timetable was created at the year end. Now, they had a speciality position, English language arts, where that teacher was subject teaching throughout the school. Everyone's class timetable, practically everyone's, had to change. It created havoc for teachers, it led to poor continuity at the start of a year, and even a grade 11 English language arts course was affected because they have semesterisation.

I would say to you, I know my decision would be to abolish that hold-back process. If you've been doing the hold-back process for 10 years, I would think you have good data now to be able to say this is not the most effective way of protecting the financial bottom line, but it certainly does impact negatively the schools of which are impacted by this hold-back process.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the hon. Member for his petition. As most of us have already heard, this was a stipulation in the contract that was negotiated through NLTA, and it had to do with a seniority clause that they had negotiated in their contract. I can certainly appreciate where the hon. Member is coming from with regard to the school that he's speaking about, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue, as a department and as a district, to work with the NLTA to see that we try and mitigate this issue as much as we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations.

WHEREAS there are many persons who are unable to better themselves and are unable to avail of government funding under the Skills Development Program; and

WHEREAS there is a lack of flexibility to deliver programs because of circumstances that do not meet government policies and therefore are falling through the cracks;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to look at the Skills Development Program, to recognize that these programs can be restrictive and, as a result, outcomes are limited. Policies should be developed and applied to ensure there are mechanisms to address specific and unique situations. There should be a greater level of flexibility to accommodate the wider range of people seeking assistance.

I worked many years with the department and, of course, I've had some dealings with the past minister. We brought some specific cases forward. We were able to help some; some, not so much. I think, when we look at the state of our economy, in terms of our population, in terms of our employment, in terms of our out-migration, we should be doing anything and everything we can to ensure that those

individuals that come forward that have unique situations are given a chance to better themselves and to become a contributing member of our society.

We have cases where individuals are just looking for a hand up rather than a handout. They're not numerous, but we should be helping them up. We should be helping them up and looking at our programs and looking at our policies and guidelines to ensure that these people have an opportunity to participate in our economy and to make valuable contributions.

I think, in my past years – I don't know if it was a Liberal or PC minister, but it stuck in my head that a minister said one day, policy should never override common sense. I think, in this instance, there are individuals out there who are losing an opportunity to better themselves, losing an opportunity to become a contributing member of our society, and I think the department and the minister responsible should be looking more closely into this to ensure everyone has that opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for the petition. As a government, we've been working together co-operatively and collaboratively to look at policy options to make sure that we have a more inclusive society, that we are looking after those that are more vulnerable. And we are tailoring programs so that there are additional supports.

I had the pleasure to work with the former minister, as well, of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, as well as the current Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, as we launched the Adult Literacy Action Plan. This is a \$60-million plan over the next five years, of which we can have specific actions that will help people attach to the labour force, to get further education, to expand our programs and services to make sure that they are more available to people, and that people have greater opportunities here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at all avenues of which we can make sure that people of all ages and all demographics are being able to attach to the labour force so that we can continue to grow the economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Foxtrap Access Road in CBS is a vital link to both the TCH and Peacekeepers Way, as well as being a heavily populated area. The road is in immediate repairs, in need of asphalt resurfacing, as well as shoulder repairs. This road is not listed for resurfacing until 2023 in the five-year roads program. And it's not soon enough; it needs immediate attention.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, called upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide immediate repairs to the Foxtrap Access Road.

Mr. Speaker, I realize this is November, and as early tendering is in place – I get that too, that'll come out in the spring, early spring, late February, March, whenever. I was looking through petitions and I felt this was an opportune time – we're opening the House on November 4 – to bring this to the floor of the House of Assembly. And I'll have many more opportunities throughout Question Period and petitions and debate.

But in preparation for the House, the minister's own district, it was a glaring example of what we'd call back in the good old Liberal days, the Joey days, was the pork barrel in politics. When an election was called, if you stayed in the one spot too long, an asphalt spreader could run over your feet. That's the truth. There was blacktop everywhere during election time.

So I got an ATIPP request and I checked out the ATIPP request for the minister's district, just

trying to see where everything stood. Then I got another ATIPP request for the full, entire 40 districts and I started doing some looking around. There are some areas where there are high amounts because of the Trans-Labrador. It was the Bond Bridge. It could be the lift bridge in Placentia or Team Gushue, just to name a few. The ones that were high were justifiable; it made sense when you compared it.

The minister's district – it has nothing to do with Veterans Memorial, this has to do with in his district, municipal roads. We all have roads in our districts; I'm sure Members over on that side, as well as our side. With the minister's amount of roadwork, I normally give allowance – people told me before you should go down in his district and look and I said, no, I get some of that piece.

We never took the politics out of paving you see, Mr. Speaker. This crowd did. For three years we've listened to you crowd – meaning us. We didn't care. We never took it out, they did. This was their signature: Five-year roads program, we've taken the politics out of paving. Not doing what this crowd did, we're never doing that again. They rose above that. I always supported a five-year roads program – always. They're the ones who implemented it, told us to take the politics out of paving.

I've read it and I've reviewed it and I've read it and I've reviewed it and the numbers don't lie. This year alone there's almost \$10 million going to the minister's district. I'm sure a lot of Members in this House would love to see \$10 million worth of work come to their district. Is that taking the politics out of paving? No, it's not. It's making a mockery of their five-year roads program.

If there's that much money to go around – you can tell my colleague for Harbour Main you have no money to pave roads. All the while you're down filling your own – people are amazed with the amount of pavement. Why don't you spread it around to be fair to the province and do what your five-year roads program was intended to do?

MR. SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

MR. PETTEN: Take the politics out of paving and do what's right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

If the Member opposite would like for me to table the three Roads Plans that we've already launched – any paving that's been done in the district that I represent was clearly outlined the last three years in the Roads Plan.

Mr. Speaker, also, he talks about the amount of investment in districts and the Member for Burin - Placentia West looked over at me and smiled. This year alone, we will invest \$10 million in paving in a district represented by the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, we just had a business plan approved for Route 210 that over the next two years will put \$20 million worth of roadwork into that district. It's not about who represents the district, it's about safe roads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is since we've launched the five-year Roads Plan we've invested in 37 of 40 districts in this province. The only reason we haven't invested in the other three is because they don't have provincial roads.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is here, since 2015, we've invested \$700 million in roads throughout this province. We've paved 2,100 lane kilometres, enough lanes to go to Corner Brook three times.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the minister to conclude his comments.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

No further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege to stand here as the new Government House Leader, and I have –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Thank you.

I certainly appreciate the support of my colleagues in the House. It's been a privilege over the last number of weeks to work with the other House leaders, Mr. Speaker, to ensure we get legislation brought forward, we co-operate fully and work together to make sure we are able to bring legislation forward that really does help the people of this province.

I'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker – before I get to the Orders of the Day – if I didn't thank the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. He has done an outstanding job –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: – over the last four years in government of giving guidance and direction. I know when he was a Member opposite, he spent four years on the other side doing the same thing. So his guidance, direction and good cheer, Mr. Speaker, certainly has stood us well in this House, and I have very large shoes to fill, which I will try and do as best as possible.

I will work in co-operation and with as much time as possible with my colleagues so that we are working together to ensure this people's House is working as effectively and efficiently and in the best interest of the people of the province.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, Orders of the Day.

The first thing I would like to call, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, Bill 5, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader that she shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, Bill 5, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Passed.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act," carried. (Bill 5)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act. (Bill 5)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 5 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol, Bill

6, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol, Bill 6, and that this bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol," carried. (Bill 6)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol. (Bill 6)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 6 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend the Labour Standards Act – this is by leave, Mr.

Speaker – and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time. This is by leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no objections, leave granted.

It has been moved and seconded by the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, Bill 8, 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.’

Passed.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act,” carried. (Bill 8)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act. (Bill 8)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 8 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, this House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the 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.’

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, 1:30 of the clock in the afternoon.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 1:30 p.m.