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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Today I am pleased to welcome to the public gallery some members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

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

**Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we will hear members' statements from Members for the Districts of Port au Port, Trinity – Bay de Verde, Port de Grave, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Kilbride, and Conception Bay South.

The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the many volunteers of the Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation on another successful telethon, which was held on March 22, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation was established in 1996 to provide financial assistance to sick children and their family members when they need to access care at a medical facility outside the area, or out of the Province, if necessary.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the volunteers of this Foundation work tirelessly year-round to raise funds to assist children and their families with needs related to medical travel that are not covered by other sources. Many service groups and businesses in the Bay St. George area generously support this exceptional organization.

Mr. Speaker, this Foundation is a 100 per cent volunteer organization, and the administrative expenses have been sustained at less than 3 per cent annually since its inception.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating the volunteers of the Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation, and all those who have supported this invaluable organization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize This Little Light 2015, a program sponsored by the Masonic Lodge of Heart's Content.

This year, members of the Masonic Lodge of Heart's Content, in partnership with the Communities Against Violence, invited six elementary schools from Trinity South to participate in their fourth annual poster contest.

Being that February was Violence Prevention Month, the theme of the contest was friendship first. Students were asked to depict friendship as an alternative to violence and bullying.

Participating schools included Tricon Elementary from Bay de Verde, Perlwin Elementary in Winterton, and Acreman Elementary in Green's Harbour, along with others. The contest concluded, recognizing all students who had demonstrated art with a concept of friendship first.

It was wonderful to attend and see what young eager minds can communicate through art. A proclamation against violence and bullying was read and signed by students from each of the schools, along with the members of the lodge. At the end of the celebration, prizes and certificates were awarded to students.

I ask all hon. members to congratulate all participating students, as well as the members of Masonic Lodge of Heart's Content, for a job well done on this most important issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

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

I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate Ms Lynch's Grade 3 class from Coley's Point Primary who are HotShots at energy conservation. They won five new iPads for their class and were one of four provincial grand prize winners in this year's contest sponsored by Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

The contest is designed to raise awareness about the importance of energy conservation and is one of several components offered through the HotShots initiative and the takeCHARGE school programs. The program engages students in a fun way to think about ways to conserve energy and protect our environment for future generations.

The students, through their own research, created visual displays to demonstrate their understanding of energy conservation. A digital story was then created using student voices to go with their pictures. The video displayed the student's knowledge about why saving energy is important in the Twenty-first Century and showed meaningful ways to be energy efficient at home and school. Mr. Hurley, the principal, says the students' work truly is an example of how we can all learn to conserve energy every day.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating these students on being energy HotShots.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Marcel O'Brien of L'Anse-au-Loup, who was chosen as the 2014 inductee into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame.

After graduating from the College of Fisheries in the early 1970s, he began his career as an engineer on the Strait of Belle Isle ferry. In 1979, he bought his first vessel and embarked on a thirty-five year career.

Marcel was one of the founders of the Labrador Fishermen's Union Shrimp Company Limited. He served as a director for many years, and is one of only two fishermen to be president of the company. In the early 1980s he was appointed L'Anse-au-Loup's harbour master, and went on to serve as President of the Harbour Authority for many years.

Marcel served as Chair of the L'Anse-au-Loup Fishermen's Committee, and as Labrador Director for the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary for twenty-five years, many as first vice-president. Marcel continues his career today by instructing Fishing Masters Class 3 and 4.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Marcel O'Brien as the 2014 inductee to the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Kilbride.

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

**MR. DINN:** Mr. Speaker, I stand today to highlight the efforts of Margie Stead of Kilbride. In 2009, Margie's niece, Jeannette, who had recently visited Africa, told Margie about the abject poverty in which many orphan children in Kenya were living. In spite of multiple sclerosis, Margie started a group to help and in November 2009, \$1,800 was sent to Kenya.

Since then, this non-profit group, Matthew 25 Outreach Inc., have been fundraising and sending substantial amounts of money to Gideon's Children's House and School, an orphanage that originally had forty-two orphaned and at-risk children, but now looks after 180. The on-site school feeds and educates another 220 impoverished children.

Through Margie's leadership and hard work, the orphanage has been provided with food, clothing, medicine, beds, washrooms, a chicken coop, seed, salaries, and a six-room schoolhouse.

A recent drought in Kenya caused the orphanage much hardship. Their shallow wells went dry, and 50 per cent of their crops were lost. Today, the children and staff have to walk six kilometres to get water from a dirty river. Margie and her group are now raising \$20,000 to drill an artesian well.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in commending the charitable work of Margie Stead.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Speaker, recently I had the privilege to attend the fifth Annual Athlete and Coach of the Year and Sports Hall of Fame Ceremony in Conception Bay South. I thank the town and their staff for organizing this event and for recognizing the extraordinary contributions of past and present athletes and coaches. I can assure you that with the tremendous athletic talent in Conception Bay South, it is no easy task to select these award winners.

Mr. Speaker, for 2014, Heather Healey was named Senior Female Athlete of the Year, and Tyler Hennessey was recognized as the Senior Male Athlete of the Year. In addition, the Junior Female Athlete for 2014 was Jessica Davis, and the Junior Male Athlete was Steven Rideout. The distinction for Coach of the Year went to long-time coach, Mr. Eric Hart.

The town has also inducted several members of the community to the Conception Bay South Sports Hall of Fame. This year Arthur Tilley was inducted as an Athlete/Builder, Emily Babb as a Builder, and Gerald Tilley as a player.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in offering congratulations to the winners and thank the Town of Conception Bay South for

their continued support for active living in the community.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, and the Minister for Advanced Education and Skills.

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a significant milestone in the professional career of Dr. Suzanne Brake, Director of Seniors and Aging and Provincial Director of Adult Protection, with the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

Dr. Brake has been named the Newfoundland and Labrador recipient of the Canadian Association of Social Workers Distinguished Service Award for 2015. This morning I had the pleasure of attending an event to recognize this achievement, which was hosted by the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers.

Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise to me, or to Dr. Brake's colleagues, that she has been recognized for her outstanding contributions to the social work profession. I have witnessed her dedication and professionalism first-hand, Mr. Speaker, and I know that this acknowledgment is well deserved.

Dr. Brake's social work education includes a Bachelor of Social Work and Masters of Social Work – both from Memorial – and a Ph.D from the University of Calgary. Over the past thirty-five years, she has worked in direct practice, management, research, policy development, and education. In 2005, she joined the provincial government and has been instrumental in developing and implementing the Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework. This framework has resulted in a host of programs and initiatives designed to combat ageism and

provide more opportunities for seniors to live healthy, active lives, and to become more engaged in their communities.

Last week, my colleague, the hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, rose in this House to note that March is National Social Work Month. Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my thanks and appreciation to the social workers of Newfoundland and Labrador for the work they do, day in and day out, to support our most vulnerable populations.

I would also like to thank the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers for inviting me to participate in this morning's celebration of Dr. Brake's achievement. Dr. Brake is with us in the visitors' gallery today – I will ask her to wave or stand. Here she is.

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** She is here, along with some of her colleagues and members of the association.

I invite all members of this House to join me in congratulating Dr. Suzanne Brake on her national Distinguished Service Award. She is a true example of the calibre of talent and knowledge we have within the public service in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I said this morning, despite all of her credits and her education, the most important thing about her is that she cares.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I am pleased to join in congratulating Dr. Suzanne Brake on receiving the Canadian Association of Social Workers Distinguished Service Award for 2015. It is no doubt a momentous occasion to be recognized for one's work in such a way by one's peer. As an alumnus of Memorial University, Dr. Brake exemplifies the calibre of graduates memorial produces.

As the Director of Seniors and Aging, as well as the Provincial Director of Adult Protection, Dr. Brake's role is a challenging one.

Newfoundland and Labrador has the oldest population per capita in Canada. We have all heard the statistics: One in four people in the Province will be sixty-five or older in 2025. Today, one in four people in the Province are already over sixty. Our population is aging and declining, and these are challenging demographics indeed.

I was surprised to learn that only four staff are responsible for the division of aging and seniors in government; four staff to focus on the issues over 90,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Dr. Brake is one of them and she is to be commended for her achievements, her ambition, and her insight.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I too thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Congratulations to Dr. Suzanne Brake for her passion and compassion throughout her career as a social worker. She has been a leader in shining a light on the needs of seniors Province-wide, and a leader in helping develop policy that respects and honours the seniors who have helped build this marvelous Province.

I look forward to continuing to work with Dr. Brake as we develop ways to address the crucial needs of the growing aging population of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Bravo Dr. Suzanne Brake and our social workers of Newfoundland and Labrador, thank you for your expertise and commitment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the important work of municipal water system operators and to congratulate this year's recipients of the Operator of the Year and Volunteer Operator of the Year awards, which were handed out this morning at the Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop in Gander.

These awards are presented annually to one operator and one volunteer operator nominated by their communities, for their dedication and outstanding contribution to providing clean and safe drinking water.

The winners will have demonstrated ingenuity, proficiency, dedication, and professionalism in water system operation. They must be certified or working towards certification, participate in education and training opportunities, show leadership, provide support to other workers, and go that extra mile for their community. I am very pleased to tell you that the department received twenty-six very deserving nominations this year, and we were overwhelmed with the letters of praise submitted in support of these operators.

I am happy to announce to this hon. House that Marvin Bull of the Town of Eastport has been named this year's Operator of the Year and Victor Keats of the local service district of Phillips Head has been named Volunteer Operator of the Year.

Mr. Speaker, delivering clean and safe drinking water to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador is a challenging responsibility for communities. This workshop provides an opportunity for operators to come together to increase their knowledge and share real-life local experiences. It also enables operators here in the Province to learn from those involved in delivering clean drinking water in other parts of Canada and the United States.

We are always pleased to see such a great turnout for this event, and would like to thank the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs for their continued financial support through the provision of a travel subsidy for communities that participate in the workshop. Addressing water quality issues is a priority for that department as well. In 2014-15, over \$6.3 million was invested in drinking water quality-related projects including new facilities and upgrading of water treatment infrastructure and feasibility studies.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating this year's winners and all the nominees. I thank each and every one of them for their continued commitment to delivering clean and safe drinking water to the residents of this Province. This is a commitment shared by government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition certainly congratulates Marvin Bull of the Town of Eastport for being named operator of the year, and Victor Keats of the local service district of Phillips Head as volunteer operator of the year, and certainly to thank all operators from across the Province for providing important service, many times with very limited resources.

Two years ago I put forward a private member's motion on updating the safe and clean drinking water strategy. Despite our efforts, we are a have Province with many residents who do not have access to safe and clean drinking water. At any given time, we have 200 water boil advisories in over 150 communities, and that number has been consistent year over year despite millions of dollars spent.

We have recent reports from communities with excessive levels of THMs, arsenic, chloroforms and E.coli. Much remains to be done. Many

communities may have good systems but they do not have the ability to maintain or operate. There needs to be an ability to detect leaks and matters, and prevent situations from towns that are without water due to lack of backup power and others that are forced to declare a state of emergency. Water is a big issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Congratulations to both Marvin Bull from the Town of Eastport, and Victor Keats of the local service district of Phillips Head who have been named the volunteer operators of the year awards.

Mr. Speaker, year after year, day after day, not a month has gone by where we do not talk about the water issues in this Province, and to see on the government website, even just today – over 220 boil water advisories is unacceptable. I also have to note too, Mr. Speaker, that the reasons – over 220 – for these shutdowns, the disinfection system is shut off due to maintenance or mechanical failures, reasons including E.coli, Mr. Speaker. We have problems –

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

I remind the member his time has expired.

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

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

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

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight [oilandgascareerinfo.ca](http://oilandgascareerinfo.ca) – an interactive website designed for young people to explore career options in the provincial oil and gas industry. Careers range from skilled trades to technical and engineering professions,

project management and marine service disciplines.

The website was developed by the Petroleum Industry Human Resources Committee which is known as PIHRC and is dedicated to encouraging young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to pursue post-secondary education and training leading to employment in the oil and gas industry.

I am pleased to note that activities, including this website, are supported by industry and through funding provided by the Labour Market Partnerships Program, administered by the Department of Advanced Education and Skills.

Paul Barnes, Co-Chair of PIHRC and Manager, Atlantic Canada and Arctic with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, noted recently that the PIHRC website provides students with the tools to help them make informed decisions regarding their career path in the oil and gas industry.

Bob Cadigan, also Co-Chair of PIHRC and President and CEO of Noia, remarked that PIHRC strives to encourage youth in the many opportunities this dynamic industry has to offer. Newfoundland and Labrador is entering the next generation of oil and gas development as shown by recent positive announcements.

I certainly agree. Recent developments point to the oil and gas industry's long-term potential. Oil was discovered at Bay du Nord, a new scheduled land tenure system was introduced, the latest Calls for Bids resulted in a \$559 million commitment to exploration in the Flemish Pass Basin, and an increase in reserves was announced for the Hibernia field with an estimated 1.6 billion barrels of oil.

Mr. Speaker, young people are making their mark on the oil and gas industry and play an important part in contributing to the prosperous future of our Province.

I encourage students interested in pursuing a career in the Newfoundland and Labrador oil and gas industry to take a look at the information and resources available on [oilandgascareerinfo.ca](http://oilandgascareerinfo.ca).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I solemnly believe there is not one person in this House of Assembly who is not striving to keep our youth in our Province. This is an initiative which will help youth to make a decision on their future in the oil and gas industry.

I notice the Department of Advanced Education and Skills put money into it. I know the Member for Gander had promoted this for a number of months, Mr. Speaker, beforehand, and I know the current minister is very much involved with keeping youth in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas is a flourishing industry in this Province. There are times when we always said where youth have to make a career change or make a career decision, this website will definitely help the youth in that avenue.

Mr. Speaker, to all the youth, visit the website and look at the opportunities that are available in the oil and gas industry. I always said our youth is what we need to keep in our Province. This is one step to keep our youth in our Province. The Official Opposition is all for this website and to help the youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Yes, I am delighted to see young people benefit from the oil and gas industry and

benefit from this website that will help them in searching for jobs. Young people should also be cautioned that those jobs in the Province are quite limited. The oil and gas sector is actually one of our lowest employers.

Undoubtedly, there are opportunities elsewhere on a worldwide basis, but opportunity is limited for those who want to stay in the Province. My question to government is: What are they doing about diversifying the economy and creating jobs for the Province's young people in other industries as well?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

#### Oral Questions

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the lab audits completed at Eastern Health are a cause for great concern. There were fifty-one issues identified in the internal audit. In particular, concern was raised that not all Cameron recommendations were being followed.

I ask the minister: How confident are you that all Cameron recommendations are being fully implemented with regard to the labs at Eastern Health?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, as I explained previously in this hon. House, we have a process in place to ensure that we are following all standards that are in place within our laboratories and that our testing practices are sound and accurate. The recommendations stemming from the Cameron inquiry have certainly improved patient safety and the quality of health care.

We have invested millions of dollars through our regional health authorities in implementing Cameron recommendations. We are constantly



monitoring the progress on those recommendations.

In light of these recent issues at the pathology lab, I received a full review on progress with Cameron recommendations. Things are going as we would expect, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the minister said back in this House on December 15 that only five of the Cameron recommendations were not fully implemented. However, we have an ATIPP from Eastern Health that shows on December 4, a week before he stood here in the House and answered the question, twelve of the recommendations were not fully implemented.

I ask the minister: Are you telling us that Eastern implemented seven recommendations in just nine days, or are you putting incorrect information, either intention or unintentional, in this House?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, I believe there were sixty recommendations coming out of the Cameron report. Fifty-five of sixty are fully implemented. We monitor those fifty-five as well to ensure ongoing compliance. From time to time there may be an issue arise. We have quality assurance processes in place within our regional health authorities to ensure those issues are addressed.

There are five additional recommendations where work is ongoing in order to be fully compliant, but as the minister responsible, I can assure people that I am pleased with the progress that is being made. Patient safety is always paramount, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** There is still no answer to this, Mr. Speaker.

Again, ATIPP right here from Eastern Health shows that on December 4 there were twelve recommendations that were not fully implemented. The minister said there was only five.

The minister stated in this House, on December 15, when I asked questions about the lab audit, he said he just received a copy of the report that morning; however, this ATIPP shows that his department actually had a copy of this report four days earlier.

I ask the minister: Can you please explain how you were not aware of this report until four days after your officials had a copy of it?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, I do not have knowledge of what documents the member has received through an ATIPP request. What I can assure you, and I can assure this hon. House and the member opposite, of course, is that I received the report when I said I received the report on the day in question.

We have made significant progress with the recommendations of the Cameron inquiry. Fifty-five or sixty recommendations are now complete or substantially complete, and we are monitoring them on an ongoing basis.

We have invested over \$43 million to address the concerns arising from the Cameron report and to implement those recommendations. These are new positions. There are new initiatives related to quality improvement. Ultimately, cancer care is in a better place. Our lab testing is in a better place. Patient safety is in a better place.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the same question again.

The minister stood here on December 15 and said he just got the report that morning. His officials had this very important, significant report four days earlier.

I ask the minister: Why was this report not given to you until four days later? Was it not important enough?

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

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

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

Officials are interacting with the health authorities on a daily basis, on an hourly basis, in our department. There are lots of times where they receive information, there is analysis required, notes are prepared, and reports are prepared for the minister's review.

I can assure you that I received the report on the day I said I received the report, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the question is: Why didn't you get this report when the department received it four days earlier?

I am not saying you did not get it until the fifteenth. I am saying why did you have to wait until the fifteenth?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, it is not uncommon to see members of the Opposition throw public servants under the bus on a frequent basis.

Mr. Speaker, there are processes in each and every department –

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

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

**MR. KENT:** – of government. Officials require time to receive information, to analyze it, to prepare reports and recommendations for ministers. That happens each and every day.

The report was brought to my attention on a timely basis. I reviewed the report immediately. Action was taken by department immediately. More importantly, action was taken by Eastern Health immediately to address any concerns that had arose in the pathology lab, and I am pleased with the progress that has been made.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the minister can deflect responsibility, but he should remember, he is just that – he is the minister. The buck stops with him.

According to Eastern Health, the information that he provided in this House on December 15 was factually incorrect. He had access to this information four days prior. The information he gave here was incorrect.

So I say to the minister: Is this not a serious enough issue for you to be on top of this file?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, the concerns that arose at the pathology lab caused me great concern as minister – so much so that I had direct interaction with the leadership of the regional health authority. In this instance, it is Eastern Health. I have asked for regular updates. I have monitored the progress of the work of the University Health Network to ensure that all of the concerns that were raised were addressed.

It is important to keep in mind that these concerns that were raised came about as a result

of a routine quality assurance process that is in place in each of the regional health authorities. That process was put in place and approved based on the Cameron recommendations, Mr. Speaker. In this case, the checks and balances in our system worked as they should.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I think the minister should review the ATIPP – and again, I will provide him the ATIPP from his own department, if he wants to have a look at it to see how serious this is. This is not a case of just routine.

The Cameron recommendations were delivered six years ago this month. This government has constantly touted the millions of dollars –\$43 million, in fact, according to the minister – that have been invested into implementing Cameron recommendations. The minister has a responsibility to the people of this Province to ensure that the money this government is investing is being used for the best outcome.

So I ask the minister: Given the \$43 million you say you have invested, can you please explain to the people of the Province why some of these recommendations have not been fully implemented six years later?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, major change, transformational change, systemic change, takes time, and it takes resources. Quality improvement and quality assurance is an ongoing process. It is a journey; it does not have a start and an end point. So, we are constantly monitoring practices and procedures within our health care facilities to ensure that we are doing the best job we can to ensure patient safety.

We have seen major progress in quality and patient safety with diagnostic services, post-Cameron report, and we have seen improvements in the overall health care system.

All of our laboratories in this Province are accredited. We have medical laboratory technologists included under the Health Professions Act. We are making great progress, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the minister can stand and try to sugar coat this, but there were and there are serious problems in this lab.

I ask the minister again: Given the investments that you have made and the recommendations that have still not – six years later – been fully implemented, will you order a forensic audit to ensure that government's money went where it was supposed to go?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the progress that has been made in implementing the Cameron recommendations. We have seen investments to replace radiation treatment machinery at the cancer centre, we have seen investments towards a new PET scanner, new drug therapies. We have implemented recommendations identified in the report of the task force on adverse health events. We have invested in the oncology patient information system. As I mentioned previously, all of our labs are now fully accredited. We have a provincial electronic occurrence reporting system in place as well.

There are five recommendations that are more complex in nature. They require legislative change and long-term investment, but I assure you they are an ongoing priority for this government.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, again, I will repeat. I am going to give the minister a copy of this that shows twelve recommendations of the twenty-two related to the pathology lab have not been fully implemented. The minister can stand up and talk about them but it is not happening. These are serious issues.

He said time and time again, \$43 million invested in fully implementing Cameron inquiries. It is six years later, they are not all done. In fact, some that were done had been reverted to the original problem areas.

I say to the minister: Will you order a forensic audit to ensure that the monies paid to Eastern Health were spent appropriately?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, I am a little concerned at the suggestion that a forensic audit would somehow be required. It implies wrong doing. I can assure you that health officials within our department and within the regional health authorities have worked hard to ensure full implementation of the Cameron recommendations.

As I said previously, fifty-five of sixty are now complete or substantially complete. After receiving that report on December 15, I immediately ordered a full review to ensure compliance with Cameron recommendations. I did receive that report, and I am satisfied that the information that I am providing to this House, Mr. Speaker, is indeed accurate.

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

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

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Works has acknowledged in writing to the RFP proponents for new Labrador ferry services that the start date of 2016 is no longer achievable. In this House he has repeatedly stated otherwise.

I ask the minister: Now that you admit that the 2016 start date is no longer realistic, what is the new anticipated start date for the new ferry services in Labrador?

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

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

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

As I noted in the House of Assembly over the last number of days, we take the service to the people of Labrador very seriously. We have done a very in-depth RFP process to ensure that the money we are going to invest, which could be in the vicinity of \$1 billion for the people of Labrador –

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – is exactly what will better serve the people of that part of this great Province of ours, Mr. Speaker.

We are looking at trying to provide the service that will meet the needs of the individuals. We have gone through the process, we continue to do that.

The intent here is to try to stay to our timelines as much as possible. To ensure that we get the best return on our investment, Mr. Speaker, we will have to assess exactly what the construction industry can do for us and provide those services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, the existing marine services to Labrador is contracted until the proposed 2016 date outlined in the RFP, in which the minister has admitted, is no longer reachable. The start date is no longer valid.

I ask the minister: What plans do you have in place, given that the 2016 target date is not

reachable anymore, to provide marine services to Labrador once the existing contracts expire?

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

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

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

We are still obtaining information around how we best provide that service. We are looking at the dates. We are looking at the provider here and the proponents about what they can deliver on a timely fashion. We are assessing all of these processes. If it is determined that it cannot be delivered on the timely fashion that we have outlined in the RFP, Mr. Speaker, we will have an alternative approach to supplying the people of Labrador with services.

We have, for the last number of years, provided great service. We wanted to improve on that. We engaged in a process with stakeholders, we engaged with industry, and we are getting to a place, Mr. Speaker, where I am confident we will provide a better service to the people of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, many – and I stress many – Labradorians working at Muskrat Falls have not been recalled since Christmas. They are being told that Innu from the Province of Quebec are taking priority.

I ask the minister: Why does the hiring protocol outlined in the Muskrat Falls collective agreement continue to be ignored?

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

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

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, the Muskrat Falls Project is a significant project where we are seeing thousands of Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians being given an opportunity to work at Muskrat Falls; but like any of the major projects, there is always a shift and balance I guess in terms of the skillsets required as work is completed and there is a change out of different skillsets. Mr. Speaker, some people are hired back, some people are not. That is ongoing for the project.

With respect to any specific situations, certainly if the member has specific situations – there are protocols to be followed. Nalcor are managing those protocols. If anything comes to my office, we will certainly look into it.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand, the project is progressing. Thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are getting an opportunity to work, but there will be change out in the skillsets required to build Muskrat Falls.

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about the shifting demographics of something that comes with a project, the nature of a project. The hiring protocol clearly states, qualified Labrador Innu first, qualified residents of Labrador second, qualified residents of Newfoundland third. Mr. Speaker, Quebec Innu are not part of the hiring protocol but since their protest last month, all of a sudden they are getting hiring preference.

I ask the minister again: Are you suggesting that protesting is now the new hiring practice for Muskrat Falls and the protocol has been thrown out the window? Because that is what happening. That is what happening.

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

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

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I am not suggesting anything. In fact, protocols are in place. We would expect the right qualified

people who should be hired to deliver Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, to work within the schedules, we would expect that to be followed.

What I also expect, Mr. Speaker, is people to realize that members opposite stand here in this House and they argue about jobs for the people they represent. I am okay with that, Mr. Speaker, but where were they when they had a chance to stand on their feet and support the development of Muskrat Falls? They sat in their seats, Mr. Speaker, when we were creating jobs in Labrador.

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

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, one of the government members was on Open Line yesterday denying that the new Torbay school has been reconfigured as a Grades 5 to 8 school. Parents and teachers are now wondering who is right, the school board or the member for the area.

Can the Minister of Education please tell us if Grade 8s will be going to the new school in Torbay? Will Grade 8s be attending the new school in Torbay, yes or no?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has indicated on a couple of occasions now that we do not seem to know what is happening around the Torbay school. So I am really glad that he has asked the question here in the House of Assembly so I can answer the question.

What is happening with the school in Torbay is exactly as it was proceeding all along. The school was well into the design plan for a 5-7 school. That plan has continued on.

We have consulted with the district on a regular basis. The district is supportive of the notion of moving ahead with a Grade 5-7 school for Torbay. That is where the situation was and is right now, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the minister understood my question.

The member for the area was on Open Line yesterday arguing against having a Grade 5-8 school, saying that people want a Grade 5-7 school. He wants a 5-7 school, but the school board made a decision last September to reconfigure this school from a Grade 5-7 to Grand 5-8.

I ask the minister once again: Are Grade 8's going to be going to the new school in Torbay, yes or no?

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

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

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

It is interesting to try to follow what is happening over on the other side. They complain if there is a delay. Then they stand up and ask for a delay is the best that I can understand it, Mr. Speaker

What we are looking at here is exactly what needs to be done, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS SULLIVAN:** We have been working with the school district on this. The school district is supportive of a 5-7 school for Torbay. That is what the tender was called for. We are looking forward to issuing that tender in the very near future for a 5-7 school, with the complete and full support of the district – no delays.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to get this straight again.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** The school board decided last September 19 to reconfigure this school to a Grade 5-8 school. I have asked the minister twice now if Grade 8's are going to be going there. I am not getting any response back there one way or the other. I asked for a yes or no answer.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** So, I will ask the minister this way: Is the minister planning to override, to overturn, that September 19 decision of the school board? Is that what is going on here? Because they made a decision and they issued a tender in any case for 5-7. So is the minister overriding the decision that was made by the school board? Because unless she is going to override it somehow, Grade 8's are going to that school.

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

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

**MS SULLIVAN:** Mr. Speaker, let me answer both of his questions. He asked will Grade 8's be going to the Grade 5-7 school. No. It is a Grade 5-7 school, Mr. Speaker.

The second part of the question is will I be overriding. Mr. Speaker, I think I have made it very clear that we have worked in consultation with the district around this. The district very clearly indicated that they do not want to see delays. We understand the need for a 5-7 school. The district wants to see a 5-7 school. The district does not want to see any delays. We are working in concert with them. The tender

has been called. We hope to issue that very soon, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, while there has been an abundance of cod in 3PS two years in a row, fishermen in the under-sixty-five-foot fleet have struggled to find markets for their fish, and had to leave their quotas in the water.

I ask the minister: What has this government planned for the 2015 season to guarantee that there is enough processing capacity for the 3PS fishers to sell their catch?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

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

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, the 3PS fishers, I have had the opportunity to meet with the 3PS fishers on at least two occasions in the last number of months since I became the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been in consultation with them for the last number of months and, very recently in the last three weeks, I met with them again.

In the last year, Mr. Speaker, we have relaxed the processing requirement so that we could increase the amount of fresh fish that would go into the United States of America. We also opened up the door for outside buyers to come into the Province. In actual fact, in one of the meetings that I had with the 3PS fishers, we were on the telephone with a buyer from the mainland, and that door and that opportunity is still there, if they want to come into the Province and purchase on the same playing field as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

**MR. SLADE:** Mr. Speaker, that is certainly not what the 3PS fish harvesters are telling me.

Mr. Speaker, DFO has extended the 3PS fishery, during the spawning season, under the guise of science. In one week, one half million pounds of fish were taken, even though only 100 fish were needed for the research purposes.

I ask the minister: Does he agree with the harvesting of vast amounts of cod when these fish are spawning; and, if not, has he made representation to Ottawa on this matter?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

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

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, at the 3PS groundfish advisory committee meetings that took place recently, we support, as a government, maintaining a freeze on catching codfish in sensitive areas; but, as a government that really believes in research, we believe that some cod could be taken from sensitive areas for research purposes only. Again, we stand firm on that belief.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Yesterday, the minister committed to tabling a list of loans written off by government's Business Development Corporation. We want to know which loans and the amounts.

I ask the minister: Will you table the list as you committed to do so in the House yesterday?

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After Question Period yesterday, I did ask officials to put that information together. I am waiting to hear back. Anything I can table, I certainly will do in due course.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, the College of the North Atlantic campus in Qatar has had two serious privacy breaches in the span of two weeks in late 2011, which are just now coming to light. The first breach saw information such as names, salaries, birthdates, nationalities, and employee numbers exposed. The information of hundreds of employees was revealed.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills: Why did this breach occur and why did it take over a month to discover it?

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

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

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

We certainly as a government take any breach very seriously, Mr. Speaker. There is a protocol in place.

In this particular case, the protocol was followed. Incidents were reported and individuals contacted. Mr. Speaker, we feel in this particular case that protocol did indeed work.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

The changes to blood collection announced today by Eastern Health came out of the blue, demanding that nurses at St. Clare's Hospital



add collecting blood to their already overlong list of duties.

I ask the Premier: Why is government allowing Eastern Health to put yet another burden on top of already overworked nurses at St. Clare's?

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

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

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

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

I can assure the hon. Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi and all members of this House that improving wait times and patient flow in our health care facilities is a really high priority for us. In fact, we have invested over \$160 million over the last eight years in wait-time initiatives.

The process that is being referred to in the media and that the member is raising today is not actually a new one. In fact, nurses in the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre have been taking blood from patients for quite a number of years, approximately a decade, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I would love the minister to explain to us how the wait times are going to be helped by nurses who are already overworked in the ER having extra duties put on them. Let him explain that one. That is a beaut.

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

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

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

I would like to say I am surprised by the hostility, but I cannot say that – and she

continues to yell at me, Mr. Speaker, as you can hear.

The emergency department at St. Clare's has recently been renovated, and that is going to lead to some improvements in process. We have spent about \$4.1 million to improve patient flow and to address wait times. Eastern Health is continuing to move forward with a number of operational improvement initiatives that will improve patient flow, not only making life better for patients but making life better for our nurses, which is incredibly important as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, it is too bad the minister does not know the difference between hostility and pure shock.

I would like him now to tell us: Will he bring into this House the evidence that this is going to work at St. Clare's Hospital, both for the nurses and for patients?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, our experience over the last decade at the Health Sciences Centre has shown us that these kinds of process improvements can work and can achieve efficiencies in the health care system. We are constantly challenged to look at how we are doing business and to figure out ways to improve service quality while also reducing costs. That is not an easy thing to do, Mr. Speaker, but it is something that this government, under the leadership of our Premier, is quite committed to doing.

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, government's Blue Book promised a homeownership assistance

program for working families. The Premier's mandate letter instructed the minister to do the same.

I ask the minister: It has been four years, where is this program that was promised to working families?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, the issue of housing is one that we as a government have certainly been dealing with through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We have offered many, many supports.

One of the things that we have looked at, Mr. Speaker, to support families is one, what is called a portable subsidy. Now, Mr. Speaker, there were calls for this and we have run a pilot project around that, and I am pleased to report that we are having success with it. That with all of the other programs that are offered through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, Mr. Speaker, we are supporting families and we will continue to support families.

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

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

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

Well, it is good to hear about the portable subsidies. It is something that we have been asking for. We know that seniors' housing is a number one concern for many seniors, especially so that they can live close to family, friends and services.

Will this pilot project be extended to be a permanent project of portable subsidies for seniors?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, at this particular point it is still a pilot project. We will carry out further work related to that and we will do an assessment afterwards.

I reiterate, the supports that we have in place are working, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to assess. As I said, once we finish with further work on the pilot, we will make some decisions around that then.

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, what is he going to do to address the affordable housing needs of seniors in rural communities?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the hon. member, our programs that are in place are not only for urban centres. Many of us who are rural MHAs know the work that is carried out through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and through our department.

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Maybe she needs to get a little bit educated as to what is happening out in rural Newfoundland around housing, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, during Question Period in response to my questions the Minister of Health clearly referred and read from a document. I would ask if he would be so kind as to go ahead and table that document.

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

The Speaker was watching the minister. I could not tell if the minister was reading directly from it. I know the minister was referring to a document.

I will leave it to the minister's honour. If he read directly from the document, then I would ask him to table it.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that this House not adjourn on 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 26, 2015.

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that this House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 26, 2015.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notices has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**MR. KIRBY:** 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 many parents have expressed concern about the impact of overcrowding at

Beachy Cove Elementary on the students' mental and physical well-being; and

WHEREAS many parents have questioned the impact of major space restrictions at Beachy Cove Elementary and the ability of the school to continue delivering quality curriculum to their growing student population; and

WHEREAS many parents have expressed concern about government's prolonged timelines to plan, tender, and construct the approved intermediate (grade 5-9) school in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to provide all necessary resources in Budget 2015 and beyond to have the Portugal Cove-St. Phillips intermediate (grade 5-9) school constructed, commissioned, and operational for students in September 2016.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have about fifty or sixty signatures here from residents of Portugal Cove and St. Phillips on this petition regarding the construction of the intermediate or middle school, whatever you want to call it, out in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips. It is a school that has been promised now for quite some time, about four years I guess.

We know Beachy Cove Elementary is seriously overcrowded. There is no question about that. They are using the cafeteria there for a classroom. Kids do not know what it is like to go to the cafeteria for lunch. A lot of parents feel it is unsanitary to have so many kids in that small of a space.

I think the question that keeps coming up over and over again when I talk to parents out in the area is: When is the tender going to be issued for this school? When is the government going to issue the tender for this? Because they keep being promised over and over again. They keep being sent mixed messages as well.

The Minister of Transportation and Works had said that these schools are built in four stages.

We are at stage whatever it is. Then another school that was being constructed: oh, they did all the stages at once. So it is sort of like one answer has to do with one school and one answer to do with the other.

This government has promised, I believe it is six new schools are going to open in September 2016. I think that is a tall order to live up to. They all keep making assurances.

I heard the Member for Cape St. Francis say: Well, I do not know about the other schools, but this one is going to open. I heard the Minister of Transportation and Works say: I do not know about the other schools, but this one is going to open. That is the sort of thing we are hearing. None of them seem to know about any of the other schools but they are certain that their own school in their own districts are going to open. You really have to question whether or not that is the case.

We cannot continue to have the sort of overcrowding we have at Beachy Cove. We need a solution. I suggest that the Minister of Transportation and Works get to work and issue the tender for the construction of this new school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, it is only about ten seconds before 3:00 p.m.

I now go to the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde to begin debate on his private member's motion.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services on a point of order.

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief because I realize it is Private Members' Day and

I do not want to take away from the member's time.

Following the request to table the document, the Opposition House Leader, I heard him saying if you leave it to their honour, they will never table it – which I suspect you may have heard as well, Mr. Speaker. He said table the document, to me; you should not have been given the choice.

Mr. Speaker, immediately upon your direction, I provided the document to the Page. She made a copy of it for my records, which I have, and the original document has been provided with the Clerk. So, I find the member's comments offensive and inappropriate, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Speaker did not hear the exchange between the two hon. members, but I will undertake to have a review of the tape to see and make a decision later.

The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde, to begin debate on this private member's motion.

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

I am pleased to stand in my place this afternoon and open debate on the following private member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urges government to immediately consider terminating compensation for Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr. Speaker, let us be crystal clear on one point as we begin debate on this resolution this afternoon, we are not calling upon government to eliminate Parliamentary Secretaries. In light of our current financial situation, we are urging government to immediately terminate compensation for Parliamentary Secretaries. Other than that, that they are reimbursed for the expenses they incur in their role.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to show financial prudence. The Premier did the following in reaction to the financial situation of the Province: The Premier reduced the size of the Cabinet. He did so on March 12 and reduced

his Cabinet by three, as we were advocating for and called for back in January. At the same time, the Premier had the opportunity to end compensation for Parliamentary Secretaries.

The Premier has given direction to the Speaker to look at reform in the House of Assembly. He has asked the Speaker to convene a meeting of the management committee to request that a members' compensation review committee be put in place to review the MHAs' pension plan. He has asked the Speaker to convene a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee of the House of Assembly to complete an analysis of all the orders with a view to modernize the procedures and make the House of Assembly proceedings more efficient and to provide greater involvement for all MHAs in the legislative process.

Cutting payment for Parliamentary Secretaries is something that they can do now – right now. That will immediately affect the bottom line; it will save taxpayers \$135,000 a year. That is over \$500,000 in a four-year period, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants could have continued to do their duties, as given to them by the minister, without the pay. That is how it happens in other provinces, like Nova Scotia where MHAs or MLAs actually assist without being legislatively recognized or paid.

We had a Cabinet minister put up his hand and remove himself from Cabinet. Did the Premier go the extra step and ask the Parliamentary Secretaries if they were willing to do the same?

If the Premier and this government were truly serious about saving money, government would have shown fiscal prudence and have been a leader for the rest of the Province. Cutting the Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants' pay would have been an example of that.

Since January, we have been advocating to the Premier to reduce his Cabinet size and to stop paying his Parliamentary Secretaries. He has half the job done. No other Atlantic Province has paid Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants, and their government is working fine.

The Premier has said on many occasions in this House that everything is on the table. Well, why is it, Mr. Speaker, that Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants' compensation is not on the table? This government finds itself in a dire financial situation and blames it on low oil prices. Contrary to what this government is trying to convince the public, the financial crisis is not all about the drop in oil prices.

Remember, this government had projected a deficit of \$538 million for this fiscal year when oil was trading at \$105 a barrel. Government needs to accept responsibility for the financial situation in this Province. Twenty billion dollars in oil revenues have come into this Province over the last ten years. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, they blew the chance to set aside a rainy-day fund. They failed miserably to grow and diversify our economy. When you look at the record, you will this government had one great skill: They were masters of illusion, masters of creating the illusion of success because what the real record shows is a sorry, if not tragic, legacy of lost opportunities.

Whether or not other paid positions within the Legislature such as House Leaders, Deputy House Leaders, Opposition House Leaders, Whips, Caucus Chairs, the people who serve on the Public Accounts Committee should be compensated is a matter to be decided by the Management Commission or an independent committee to be appointed by the Management Commission following the next general election. This is not relevant to today's discussion about Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants.

Parliamentary Secretaries are important to a smooth operation of government and is a great training ground for future Cabinet ministers, but the positions need not be compensated at a time of fiscal restraint. Of course they should be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred doing their jobs as Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the Parliamentary Secretary leaves a couple of questions to be answered. In the absence of ministers, why isn't it that a Parliamentary Secretary does not answer questions on behalf of the minister's department? That is what happens in many

other parliamentary systems. The role is to assist the minister.

Why, Mr. Speaker, was there no mandate letters for the Parliamentary Secretaries, not even an honourable mention in the minister's mandate letters of Parliamentary Secretaries? How is it determined which department and ministers get a Parliamentary Secretary or Assistant? It seems to be all over the place to me: Education and Early Childhood Development; Forestry and Agrifoods; Health and Community Services; and Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. The not-so-lucky departments: Finance, Treasury Board, big departments; the Department of Advanced Education and Skills; the Department of Natural Resources; some of the larger departments in government.

Mr. Speaker, if you take some time to look at their webpages and the contact list for the minister's offices – the contact list for the Minister of Health and Community Services is very easily found on the minister's website. Just click on contacts. The executive support and service in the Minister of Health and Community Service's office, we have the minister; we have the executive assistant to the minister; we have the deputy minister; we have the associate deputy minister; we have the assistant deputy minister of corporate services; we have the assistant deputy minister of professional services; we have the assistant deputy minister of regional services; we have the assistant deputy minister of policy and planning; we have the assistant deputy minister of population health; and we have the ministerial liaison. There is no Parliamentary Secretary listed on the Minister of Health and Community Services' website.

The contact page – click on contact. I have just listed maybe a dozen positions in the minister's office, Mr. Speaker, and not one reference to who is the minister's Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at our neighbours in the other Atlantic Provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Atlantic Province with paid Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants.

There are Cabinets that are larger and smaller than us. The range is from eight to fifteen, including the Premier. They manage their

affairs in their province without paid Parliamentary Secretaries. The Premier in other provinces takes on much larger portfolios than our current Premier. Maybe he could assume some of the duties to help out his ministers with larger portfolios.

Let us look at the responsibilities in other provinces. In the Province of New Brunswick, the Premier's responsibility: President of the Executive Council; Chair of the New Brunswick Jobs Board; Minister Responsible for Innovation; Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister Responsible for Women's Equality; Minister Responsible for Rural Affairs; Minister Responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The size of Cabinet in New Brunswick, including the Premier: thirteen; Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants: zero.

Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's responsibilities: President of the Executive Council; Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister of Planning and Priorities; Minister of Aboriginal Affairs; Minister Responsible for Military Relations. Size of Cabinet, including the Premier: fifteen; Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants: zero.

Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker, obviously a much smaller province, but the Premier's responsibilities: Minister of Finance and Energy; President of Executive Council; Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs; Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs. Size of Cabinet, including the Premier: eight; Parliamentary Secretaries: zero.

Now we are home, the great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. Premier's responsibilities: President of the Executive Council. Size of Cabinet, including Premier: fourteen; paid Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants: five.

Mr. Speaker, we are not questioning the role of the Parliamentary Secretary or the Parliamentary Assistant. Seven current Cabinet ministers were Parliamentary Secretaries at one point: the Member for Trinity North; Burin – Placentia West; Grand Bank; The Isles of Notre Dame;

Ferryland; Terra Nova; Humber West. I am sure all those ministers gained very important experience before becoming Cabinet ministers. It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that most people in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador do not get paid for on-the-job training.

I thank you for the opportunity to open the debate on this motion here today. I look forward to hearing from members from the government side and the Third Party with their positions on today's debate. I hope that all hon. members support the taxpayers of our Province. This government can immediately save the taxpayers of our Province \$500,000 over the next four years. This is no small chunk of change. We all know the work being done by Parliamentary Secretaries is valuable. No one on this side of the House is questioning that, Mr. Speaker. We are questioning the government's commitment to addressing the immediate financial situation of this Province.

It is what the current Minister of Finance has called an economic crisis. This leads us to think that action must be taken immediately to correct this situation, and we must begin here in our own house, Mr. Speaker. We have been advocating for this since January. Parliamentary Secretaries should not be paid in these uncertain financial times.

No one is saying the Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants should not keep doing what they are doing helping out their ministers, no one is saying that they should not be reimbursed for the cost incurred on the job, we are saying Parliamentary Secretaries, again, is a great ground for training financial future Cabinet ministers. Again, they are getting paid for on-the-job training.

What we are saying is it is time for this government who got us into this mess – they have the responsibility to get us out. For that reason, they are to lead by example, Mr. Speaker. It is time to stop paying Parliamentary Secretaries and Assistants immediately.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing from other members on this important motion.

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.

It is indeed a pleasure to get up here again today. Like I always say, and I say it when I get up, the same thing, it is a pleasure to be here to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the people of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important day. This is a day when members get a chance to put forth motions to the House of Assembly. It is important that we, as private members, as backbenchers, or MHAs on the other side, that we get to bring something forward that is very important to this House of Assembly. It is a motion that is brought forward. There is debate on both sides.

Just recently, there was an occasion where there was a motion brought forward by the member of the Third Party that I felt very proud to be part of the motion. I think a lot of people in the Province really felt that it was a great motion. It was nice to see the support from both sides of the House. It was a motion on mental health and setting up an all-party committee, which was very important to people with mental health issues and very important to everyone in the whole Province.

Just last week, our private member's motion was about the fishery, what we did with the shrimp fishery and how we protected fishermen in the Province. I think it was a general consensus here. It was an important motion. It was important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The fishery is a very important part of all – more so in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I spoke yesterday a little bit about the fishery. I have an involvement in the fishery.

I listened intently to the motion, but today's motion is a little different. I think it a bit political to me, the way this motion came in today. I feel a little bit uncomfortable because I think as most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – and I look at politicians. I always remember my father. Do not take this

the wrong way, people at home, but I figure that politicians sometimes get the bad rap. They get a rap there that they are crooked. They are this, that, and everything else. Sometimes there is a bad play for politicians, but I always used to say there was no crooked politician. My father was always an honest man, and that is the way I always want to see it. I think that is the way most of us are in here.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** When we get up today and debate – I am just going to do this a little bit at the beginning because I am not going to talk about it. I feel uncomfortable about debating whether I am going to be paid or not paid. I do not think the people in this House of Assembly should decide salaries, should decide what we get in compensation, our pensions or anything else.

I feel, as a Parliamentary Secretary – I am very proud, actually, to be a Parliamentary Secretary because like anybody in anything, you strive to get a little better and little better in whatever you do. Someday, I do not know if I will be a minister or not but if I do, it will be a great day for me. A Parliamentary Secretary is a stepping ground for that.

Just like the hon. member mentioned, I think he said there were seven, but in actual fact there was more than that because I think the Member for St. John's West was also a Parliamentary Secretary. I think the Member for Gander was also a Parliamentary Secretary.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay, I just wanted to let them know.

My good colleague right here, he is after going right around the whole loop. He was Parliamentary Secretary, then he was minister, and now he is Parliamentary Secretary again. Do you know something, Mr. Speaker? I feel very proud to sit on side of this man because the experience that he gives me, we talk a lot, and that is what it is all about.

A Parliamentary Secretary is an experience, like working in the department – listen, my

background is not in an office. My background is out working. I never, ever thought I would be in an office to tell you the truth, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed what I did all of my life, but I really do enjoy being an MHA. I really do enjoy representing the people of my district, the District of Cape St. Francis, and I take pride in that.

I know across the way, I am not sure if the member was ever a Parliamentary Secretary. I know he had an opportunity to serve in government from St. John's South.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** You were? No, okay, but I think one of the other members over there had the opportunity to be Parliamentary Secretary. It is a job that you take great pride in. I am after going to a good few functions now representing the minister. When you go in and you are representing a Minister of the Crown, it is great pride for you to stand up there, whether you are making an announcement or whatever you are doing. You really feel proud, and it is not that you are representing the minister or anything else but it is a nice responsibility. It a nice responsibility to have.

Mr. Speaker, I did not think I would get into it this long. When the review came for the Members' Compensation Review Committee, and the first time I was elected, I had the opportunity in 2009 – actually, the chairperson of that review committee at the time was the Member for Virginia Waters. She was on the review committee.

I just went through it today. It is a review of MHA salaries, allowances, severance payments, and pensions. In all that review – look, there is the whole review right there. I am sure you guys have it anyway. There is not one mention – and she was the chairperson at the time – of Parliamentary Secretaries. Whether their job should be cut or they were getting paid too much or getting paid too less or whatever, but that is where this should be done. It should be done in a committee other than the people in here.

I do not feel comfortable – listen, it is like you have a job. The job you have, if I am driving a truck or I am working at the hospital or I am



working, I should not be able to go in and tell somebody what I am going to be paid or not paid for. There are people there, that is the job. It is this House, it could be the Management Commission, or I would suggest it would be under review in this. That you review it, and whether you get paid or you do not get paid, to me, as Parliamentary Secretary, I really do appreciate the job and the title that I am doing, but it is not for me to decide whether I get paid for it or not. I think it is someone else.

I think of all the things that we have to debate in this House, there are things out there – we could be debating education. We could be debating health care. We could be debating municipal affairs. There are different portfolios all over this that we can debate but I really do not – like I said, I am going to talk a little bit later on about Parliamentary Secretary positions.

I really do not think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador believe we should be in talking about what we are compensated for or not compensated for, whether we should get paid a certain amount of salary or we should not get paid a certain amount of salary, or we should get this for our pension. It should be someone else. We should not be the ones to decide whether we are paid or not paid. That should be outside of government. That is just my belief and I think that is where it should be.

I have to applaud our Premier. Our Premier has done a great job since he came in.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** The review of what size government is going to be – and it is going to be reduced down to forty seats. I believe that is a great thing, but I cannot, as in here, vote whether my district is going to be cut, or my district is going to be increased, or whatever. I think that is the job of an independent committee, a committee set up by government to decide that.

That is similar to what we are debating here today. This is not the place to debate whether I get paid or not get paid. Somebody else should decide that, not me. That is where I am with this today.

As a Parliamentary Secretary, again I look at people who were Parliamentary Secretaries for years gone by. It blows me away when you look at Pierre Trudeau, Jean Chrétien and some people like this. I am in that esteem, I do not know if I ever thought I would be a Parliamentary Secretary like those guys, or even like my hon. member here on the side of me for Harbour Main. It is great to be put in that category.

You know, I look at some of the jobs. I work with a great minister. He has a lot of portfolios to do. I tell him, let me know, whatever it is you need me to do, whatever you want me to go to. I sit in on a lot of meetings, whenever I am available or whatever I can do to help him out.

Just to give you an example now of what this minister does – and I laughed at him with the last shuffle because I said boy, you have a lot on your plate. He is the type of minister who likes to get out and go to districts and get in with the people, whether it is an announcement down in Harbour Breton, or whether it is an announcement on the Northern Peninsula, or it is an announcement in Labrador, whatever. It seems like he gets all around.

He is the Minister of the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. He is also the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. He is also the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services. He is also the House Leader in here. I look at some of the work that these ministers do, and I have to applaud you. It is unbelievable the amount of work you do.

I speak to my colleagues all the time and I know they are here – and they are not complaining. I am not saying anybody is complaining. They are here until 11:00 or 12:00 in the night getting budgets ready and everything else, and working for the departments. I can honestly say, I am very proud to be involved.

I know my minister, I know what he does. I call him my minister. I am Parliamentary Secretary with him so I call him my minister. I know how hard he works. My job as Parliamentary Secretary is to assist him in any way that I can, whether it is to go to a speaking engagement, or sit in on meetings. He cut off a couple of little

things in the department that he wants me to be in control of. Whatever it is, I gladly want to do it.

To discuss whether I should be paid for it or not paid for it, I do not think that is my responsibility to do it. I will tell you one thing, I am very proud to be in this House of Assembly. I am very proud to be an MHA.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Whether the salary is this or the salary is that, it gives me great pride to be whatever it is.

I have to say, I really believe we could be discussing a whole lot more important things on a private members' day, than how much we get paid or we do not get paid. I think you are playing a little bit of politics with it, and that is it. If that is the way you want to be so be it, but I believe that – like I mentioned earlier with the hon. Member for St. John's Centre when she got up and gave her motion on mental health, and we had people here that day. We all decided in this House that day, yes, we are going to support this. This is a very important motion. I think that is where we have to be.

The same thing when we did the fishery. The fishery is very important. We wanted to make sure that our inshore sector and our offshore sector were treated fairly. We did not want to pit one against the other, but we did not want people just saying, okay, you are out of the fishery. We wanted it done so that it was fair to all fishermen, whether it is inshore or offshore fishermen. That is what was debated here, and I think it was a great debate.

To debate whether I get paid for something or I do not get paid for something, I do not feel comfortable with that at all. I feel comfortable about being a Parliamentary Secretary. I feel comfortable about being an MHA, but when it comes to deciding whether I get paid for something or do not get paid for it, that should never be my choice. There should be an independent committee set up and whatever – and there is.

There is an independent committee here that reviews everything. It is supposed to review

everything here. The Chairperson in 2009 was the Member for Virginia Waters. I believe that is where that is done.

We can talk about everything, and I know the member talked about different things here. The Premier also stated he is going to review everything that is on the go here in the House of Assembly, and so it should be. Because we are here and there are all kinds of different – we are in a fiscal time in our history where we really have to watch it. It is like all of us say, it is like your own household. You have to always be cognizant of what money you have coming in and what money you have going out. My father always used to say you cannot spend \$500 if you are only making \$400. So, that is where we have to be today.

We have to be fiscally responsible. I am sure when the Premier says that everything is on the table, everything is on the table. We should have everything on the table, but we have to be responsible. It is not our decision. It should not be our decision to decide who gets paid and who does not get paid in here. It has to be an independent, like is already set up here, that it is an independent person to decide whether I get paid for a Parliamentary Secretary. Because I take great pride – like I told you, it is a fantastic job.

I look across the front row here and nearly every minister – I think there are only two ministers here in government, maybe three, who were not Parliamentary Secretaries. Obviously, it is a good stepping stone to be a minister down the road, if that is what you want to be.

First and foremost, I want to be an MHA. I want to represent the District of Cape St. Francis and I want to represent the people that I do. Whatever happens to me in politics, whether it is a Parliamentary Secretary or minister, first and foremost, I want to be an MHA because I really enjoy doing what I am doing.

I am getting down to the last little bit now on this, what we are talking about here today. Again, I believe that the people in Newfoundland and Labrador do not want us in here debating our salaries or debating whether we are going to get paid or not paid. I think that is an arm that should be outside what is in here,

and it should be done through whether it is the review committee or the House of Assembly – when you look at the Management Commission, they are going to decide I guess whether the Whips in here get paid. We have Whips in the Third Party – I know the House Leaders and the Deputy House Leader on this side does not get paid because they are ministers. They do a lot of work. I know there is a House Leader and a Deputy House Leader and another House Leader over there on the other side and they do get paid but, apparently, that is all going to be looked at, and so it should be.

It should be done – I should not do it, but there should be someone independent to do it. This motion today, it is shameful that we are in here debating whether we get paid ourselves or not. It is very, very shameful.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Member for St. John's North, standing on a point of order.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I did not want to interrupt the member while he was speaking. He said that the Member for Virginia Waters was the Chair of the Members' Compensation Review Committee. She was a member. She was not the Chair. Also, Parliamentary Secretaries' compensation and Cabinet ministers' compensation was not in the mandate of that committee.

Thank you.

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

There is no point of order.

Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

It is my honour to stand and speak on behalf of this private member's resolution this afternoon. Before I move on, I would just like to comment

on the speaker who just finished. He talks about not wanting to have his pay decided in here. He said we do not think that we should be discussing it in here. Maybe we should not. There is no mention of Parliamentary Secretary in that report, Mr. Speaker. The reason being he was very nice to his Cabinet colleagues over there because they are, in fact, the ones who decide what Parliamentary Secretaries get paid. It is a decision of Cabinet as to how much you get paid, not this House.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that we have brought forward on any number of occasions in Question Period. It is a pleasure at this point in time to finally get it to the floor of the House and take some time to debate it.

Parliamentary Secretaries come from the Parliamentary Secretaries Act. I will just look at a couple of points here, "In this Act 'parliamentary secretary' means a parliamentary secretary to a minister of the Crown. 3.(1) The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may appoint members of the House of Assembly to be parliamentary secretaries. (2) Not more than 4 parliamentary secretaries shall hold office at a time."

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that just happens to be the number that we need, the maximum number that we can have. We work our way down through, "A parliamentary secretary shall take an oath or affirmation" and so on.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Down in section 6 it says, "A parliamentary secretary shall be paid a salary at an annual rate to be fixed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council." That is what I just referenced, the Cabinet, and that is what we are debating here today, Mr. Speaker. We are not debating whether or not these positions should be here or should not be. We are debating whether or not there should be remuneration for these positions.

While we reference Parliamentary Secretaries, Mr. Speaker, I just want it to be let known that we are also referring to the Premier's Parliamentary Assistant which is covered in a

totally different act altogether, basically called the Parliamentary Assistant Act. So we are talking about five people, Mr. Speaker.

We are basically talking about four Parliamentary Secretaries and one Parliamentary Assistant at \$27,036 apiece. We have one in Education, a former teacher and a former Education Minister. I am sure a great resource to the Minister of Education. Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development; the MHA for Cape St. Francis spoke eloquently a few moments ago about his pleasure to be a Parliamentary Secretary and the sum of things that he is involved. Health and Community Services has the MHA for Baie Verte – Springdale.

Forestry and agrifoods, Mr. Speaker, has the MHA for Exploits. There is no department of forestry and agrifoods so he goes wherever the minister is responsible. Last month, he was with the Department of Natural Resources. This month, he is a \$27,000 assistant to the Minister of Fisheries.

Mr. Speaker, then there is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, what do they do?

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

**MR. HILLIER:** No, they do more than that.

The only place I could go looking for what these people do was to the –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Mandates.

**MR. HILLIER:** Certainly not the mandate letter, but to the website of each department because when each of these people go out to do something there is press release. Like ourselves, if we are doing something good, we like the general population to know. It is the same on the other side, I am sure.

If we go down through, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned with Education, the Parliamentary Secretary in Education is involved in literacy days, schools functions, things that he did in his career and I am sure is very good at.

Forestry and agriculture, according to the website, the Parliamentary Secretary has spent some time attending fur conferences and horticultural conferences.

In Health, Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary has addressed the School of Pharmacy. He has attended graduation ceremonies for Licensed Practical Nurses. He has attended flag raising ceremonies for the Eating Disorder Awareness Week. He has been the Parliamentary Secretary to attend the Eating Disorder Foundation. He has been to officially open the health care facility in Burin and speak at the MUN School of Nursing. That is the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. A little bit of a social butterfly, but he is busy; there is no doubt he is busy.

Then we have the Parliamentary Secretary for Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. I do not know what he does because basically their website is a mess. I will ask you to pass that along to the minister when he gets back.

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

**MR. HILLIER:** No, no, that is the only source I had of finding anything, that is all. I could not find anything on yours, so I will let you pass that along.

I noticed that Seniors, Wellness got their website straightened out last month. Perhaps this one will be up and running by the end of the year.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier – we see her there pounding their hands and cheering on behalf of her leader. She does occasional media appearances.

Mr. Speaker, I do that for free. I support my leader. I do media appearances. I do that for free, Mr. Speaker. I am not suggesting that it does not need to be done. It does, but I do it for free, as do many of my colleagues do it for free.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we do not see, which was expected when these positions were created – and my colleague in his opening address referenced it. We do not see these Parliamentary Secretaries stepping up and answering questions.

We saw questions asked this week, and because the minister is not here, some alternate minister answers the question. The Parliamentary Secretary is not stepping up and answering those questions; which, if you go back to 1982 when these particular positions were put in place, that was one of the things that was expected of them.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune on a point of order.

**MS PERRY:** The member opposite just referenced about doing *On Point* without being paid. I have done *On Point*, Mr. Speaker, pretty much since I have been here in 2007, and it is not my fault I am appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier now.

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

There is no point of order.

**MS PERRY:** Thank you.

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

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

It was a chance to get another sip of water, out of my own glass.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier says that having cut Cabinet positions, he could not cut Parliamentary Secretaries because of the increased workload. Mr. Speaker, let's have a look.

The Premier had a Parliamentary Assistant prior to the cutting of the Cabinet positions. We will have a look at the work that he does in a few moments. His job has not increased since the Cabinet positions were cut, but he still has his Parliamentary Assistant. Not only does the Premier have a Parliamentary Assistant, the Premier has a Deputy Premier who also has a Parliamentary Assistant. Mr. Speaker, who does what?

I am not suggesting there is not enough work around here for these Parliamentary Secretaries to find a day's work. Perhaps we should move one down to the Minister of Seniors and Wellness. We just talked about how long his portfolio is. Perhaps the Minister of Business should have two, but for the Premier to have a Deputy Premier and a Parliamentary Assistant, and the Deputy Premier to have a Parliamentary Secretary, that is a lot of staff to be tied up for two people whose jobs did not increase as the result of a Cabinet shuffle.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources had one, and then he moved on. I am sure it is probably lonesome in the department and having to reorganize all the work and so on, but over on the other side the Minister of Fisheries cannot wait. He is not saying anything about it. He is keeping his head down, but he just got a Parliamentary Secretary, a new Parliamentary Secretary. Notice he did not jump up and down and say, I just received a new Parliamentary Secretary. No, Mr. Speaker. He is sort of keeping his head down. He is happy about it. He is very excited about it, but he is not announcing it to anybody.

Mr. Speaker, then there is the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the Minister Responsible for the Research and Development Corporation, the minister responsible, and on and on and on. No wonder, Mr. Speaker, he had to take a week in Denmark as a break.

Mr. Speaker, he has been doing the same work –

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources on a point of order.

**MR. DALLEY:** The member just referenced the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development is on a trip for a break. He is not on a break, Mr. Speaker. He is on government business.

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

It is indeed inappropriate to refer to the presence or absence of members in the House.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**MR. HILLIER:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, we learn as we go, and that is something that I was not aware of. I will certainly withdraw that statement.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this minister has been doing the same work since last fall, when the Premier appointed Judy Manning to the Justice portfolio and she could not sit in the House. Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that for some of these positions there is no trouble to find a day's work but given these times of fiscal restraint, we are asking that government consider cutting remuneration positions to the tune of \$135,000, plus support, plus expenses.

Mr. Speaker, we can go back to other times and other places. My colleague talked about other provinces and the fact that they do not have Parliamentary Secretaries. He also talked about the heavy loads that the premiers in those provinces were carrying, whereas our Premier, even despite his broad shoulders, does not seem to be carrying the same load.

Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to tie this to something I know. One of the things I have tried to tie it to are the roles of assistant principals in schools; trying to tie it to assistant principals in schools. We know we have three or four principals here who understand what assistant principals go through and some of the work that they are responsible for. Mr. Speaker, different principals share their load with vice-principals a little bit differently. School administration units are allocated based on half unit, one unit, one-point-five units, three units for larger schools.

So let's go back to the last Budget when allocations were reduced – not for the principals but for the vice-principals. While bonuses were cut, work did not go away. There was attendance, substitute teachers, student assistants, discipline, all still had to be done.

I knew an assistant principal whose first call for substitutes came at 6:00 a.m. She was flat out

until she hung up the phone at 8:00 p.m. that evening trying to get a student assistant. She was cut, Mr. Speaker, her bonus was cut back. The same as we are talking about bonuses being cut back for Parliamentary Secretaries. The work will stay the same, as with assistant principals.

Mr. Speaker, just allow me to summarize. On March 13, the former Minister of Service NL told us that in resigning from Cabinet he took one for the team. Given the fiscal situation that this government has put us in, I ask the five of you to take one for the team. Given the fact that no other provinces in Atlantic Canada have paid assistants, I ask the five of you to take one for the team.

If you cut administrative bonuses without a subsequent reduction in work, if you can cut guidance counsellor's bonuses, if you can cut learning resources teachers with no subsequent reduction in work, then follow a real leader and step up and take one for the team, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to conclude with a Cheers and Jeers from April 8 referring to Nalcor, but we can put pretty well any face in there. It says the argument being made by government is everybody is capable of doing more with less and that everyone should share the burden. Even Crown corporations like Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are getting in on that, facing a \$10 million cut in budgets.

What about the special child –

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

I remind the member his time has expired.

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a pleasure to rise today to talk about something that I am very familiar with. Unlike the two previous speakers on the opposite side, I have been a Parliamentary Secretary. I spent two-and-a-half years in the Department of

Health – a department that is very large and diverse, and the role that I had there was very wide and diverse. I would like to go over a little bit of what a Parliamentary Secretary does, to begin my chat, and then I will go into some other areas.

The work of a department is very important and, of course, a minister, particularly of a large department, as was the case where I was in the Department of Health and Community Services, there is more work that can even be done by one person in a lot of these places.

The members talk about the executive staff, whether it be deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers. I have seen first-hand the great work that has been done in these departments, not only in the Department of Health and Community Services but throughout government. As a Parliamentary Secretary, I had a role to play as well within the department.

Some smaller things, if you look at it, speaking at events; I used to speak at quite a few events. Generally that would be if the minister was in meetings or if the minister had other functions to attend, I would take his or her place – her place, in my case. I would take her place and speak at events and represent the department every opportunity I had. I was very proud to do so, and it was an honour to do so.

Also, another more important role – I guess not important, but it something that is a little bit more tangible and hands-on. I acted as a liaison between groups that dealt with the department. So, for example, the seniors' advisory council, we would have quarterly meetings. I would sit in on those meetings. What I heard, of course, I would bring back to the minister and I would bring to executive in the department, and those things would be actioned. Recommendations from groups such as that are used in the Budget process and how we develop our way forward. Again that position was very important, and I was able to do that in the minister's absence.

Also, of course, as I said, attending functions – there were a number of times I remember – we always like to get out and celebrate, whether it be in the Department of Health, in particular, whether it be graduation to social workers or nurses, those types of celebrations, young people

who are moving into the profession. Many times those functions would fall on the same day. I would also attend one and the minister would attend another.

So, there is a wide variety of tasks that we do. Again, going back to more of the hands-on, tangible material, in two-and-a-half years, I spent a good many days in the office in the Department of Health and Community Services. I did not have the opportunity to spend as much time in my district as everyone would like to as an MHA. There were a good many functions I missed in my district because I had to attend the business in the department.

I did that very happily, and it was an honour to do so, but I think people have to get a full grasp of what a Parliamentary Secretary does, and as they are utilized. Of course, I cannot speak for the past twenty years, thirty year, whatever the case. I can speak for what I am familiar with and for what I have seen, and I have been involved with.

I know the level of involvement by Parliamentary Secretaries is quite heavy, and again, it is the role that you take on, with the understanding that you will have more duties on top of your MHA's role. You do not get paid as a minister but you get paid about half the remuneration of the minister. I would argue that I did my fair share of work. I feel as though I earned my money.

At the end of the day, it was not me who set my salary and that is something that is very important. It was not the previous Premier who put me in that role. She did not set my salary. It was set and it was set by a group outside of the political realm. I am going back to my colleague when we are looking at making decisions such as this, they probably should not be made on the floor of the House of Assembly.

I would like to talk a little bit more about some other things if I may, Mr. Speaker. We have to be careful not just to simply cut, cut, cut. I find it rather ironic that members opposite, when we first talked – when our Premier came forward with a bold initiative to reducing the House of Assembly and members in the House of Assembly, the members opposite initially were

all up in arms. They came out against it and my goodness, we cannot do that.

Now we did see a number of flip-flops throughout, but the fact remains they were not all on side. As soon as they heard the cuts, it raised their ire and they had comments to make around that and that is fine. Now all of a sudden it is a race to the bottom and we have to cut these.

I think proper perspective is needed. We have to give this careful consideration because again we have to make sure that we are able to deliver the services in the most efficient way. This is particularly important now that the Premier has reduced Cabinet. So what you have now is that the delegation of duties on ministers obviously has risen.

For myself who is the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, I now have taken on the workers' compensation commission. That is an additional duty. I am not getting paid anything additional.

That is something actually that was raised on an Open Line show I heard. Somebody called in and said well the Premier is cutting all these positions, but now the ministers who are taking extra duties, are they getting paid more, are they getting paid double salary? I can assure you that is absolutely not the case. Ministers get paid a flat amount and that does not change whether you take on fourteen portfolios or one. It does not change. That is also a very important thing to note.

My point being with the extra duties that are up on ministers, I believe Parliamentary Secretaries were justified months ago, but I truly believe they are even more justified right now. The work that goes in these departments now that they have a wider umbrella of tasks and responsibilities is even more important.

I always like talking about irony and I just mentioned something that was ironic. Something else that is very ironic, Mr. Speaker, is that we have not only – the member mentioned we have a number of members over here who have served in Parliamentary Secretary positions and Parliamentary Assistant positions,

myself being one and there were a number of others.

I said the last time when we were talking about the reduction of MHAs, before you look outward, why don't you look inward? So when we look across the way there are a number of members who served in Parliamentary Secretary positions. There are members who served in Parliamentary Assistant positions.

I look at my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl South, he was a Parliamentary Secretary and I believe while he was there, he did a great job. He was remunerated for it. He accepted that. He not only accepted the position but he accepted the pay for it, and that is fine and it was completely justified. Of course, that happened in a time when perhaps it was slightly a bit better of a fiscal situation. The price of oil is not where it is today, but that is fair.

We also have a member across the way who was Parliamentary Assistant. Mr. Speaker, I mean this with the greatest respect, he performed his job and I am sure he performed it very well, but you have to look at the context as well. When the Member for Bay of Islands was Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier – I believe it was – that was during a very different time as well.

This was a time when the government of the day was rolling back negotiated contracts with public servants. When we saw wide-spread layoffs, thousands of people laid off. Again, he took that position. He was remunerated for it. I am not saying that was a bad thing for him to do because I believe he did a very good job while he was there, but the fact remains – I bet if I asked the Member for Bay of Islands to stand now and answer my question: Was your role justified? Did you perform a service that added value? I bet he would stand to his feet and say absolutely, because I believe he did.

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** If I asked him to stand and say he performed a role that was justified and added value to the entire system, he would say it. Now if I asked him a follow-up question and



say: Did he receive remuneration for the position that he had during those fiscal times? I am imagining he would stand and say he did. Again, I do not begrudge him that because I think the service he provided was a valuable one.

That brings me right back to my point when I look over here and I look at my member – the members around – when I look at my member; I should not have repeated that. When I look at the members around me who perform the role of Parliamentary Secretary, I know they are adding value because not only do I look at the jobs they are performing, but I also look at the value I added, or at least I believe I added, while I was in the Department of Health and Community Services. It was value added and that is why we have to be careful.

We, as a government, our Premier, are very interested in delivering services efficiently –

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** – but we want to make sure we give them responsibility. We want to make sure at the end of the day we are adding value. I think this is where I end that.

As the Member for Cape St. Francis had mentioned, and I have alluded to this a little bit earlier, I truly do not believe this is a decision that should be brought forward in this type of venue, if you will, during this type of day.

It is interesting that he mentioned a couple of private members' motions that have come forward most recently and the Member for St. John's Centre. That was a perfect example, I think, of how this Legislature can work. It added value, definitely so. That was something we all could discuss and something we could decide.

This, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe is one of those instances where we, one, can decide; two, that we should decide. He had talked about how this should be a decision made by an independent group. Things have changed in the last number of years, I refer to the previous Administration. Since that time, and it is always

progressing. It is always developing as it should but things have changed here with regard to our responsibilities, the expectations of the public.

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I bet everybody here is very familiar with the Green report and the transparency and taking – I guess if I could – some power out of politician's hands where it should not be and giving it to independent outside bodies so those decisions can be made.

Another example of that, salaries for MHAs, benefits for MHAs, pensions for MHAs. If we want those things considered, we personally – I do not want to decide on what my pension should be or if it should be restructured or what that restructuring should look like. I think we leave that with an outside body, someone who is non-partisan, someone who sits on the outside, who is independent.

Again, it is all about adding value, and I think that would add value. It would take the politics out of it. I think that is what we need to do here, is take the politics out of this. We will leave it with an outside independent group. Again, which was mentioned – even though she did not, the Member for Virginia Waters, consider this piece, she sat on a board that was independent and non-partisan that considered such matters.

I think that is where we need to be. It is somewhere that we have been in the last number of years and I think that is a good thing, because we have seen in the past what happens and the slippery slope when we start making decisions in here that perhaps we should not be. We should not be wading into that water, and I think this is one of those decisions.

I can easily stand and, as I said, defend and talk about the work that Parliamentary Secretaries do. Again, it was a great training ground for me as minister. It exposed me to a number of things that I would not see necessarily as a backbencher. I think it better positions you for when you move into the front row.

If you look across the country, because the members are kind of stuck on the Maritimes,

which is ironic. They always stick on an area or a piece of geography that fits their point, but you know Canada is much bigger than the Maritimes, Mr. Speaker. We look across all jurisdictions in the country, and there are Parliamentary Secretaries, there are also junior ministers. If you look at the model used in the federal government, Parliamentary Secretaries can actually answer questions during Question Period.

To tell you the truth, Mr. Speaker – if I can please speak over the Member for CBS, if he would allow me. What I would propose is we should be looking at perhaps making the roles of Parliamentary Secretaries even more progressive. That is where I would be, Mr. Speaker. They perform a valuable task and perhaps they could provide a little bit more of a valuable task that we can add. It is all about adding value. So if they can do that – I would be more interested in having that conversation as opposed to the remuneration piece. I think that is where we need to be. I think that is where we need to be, and some thought could perhaps be given to that.

I will not belabour this too much longer. I only have a couple of minutes left. My main point is, it is incumbent on us as government to make not only the politically expedient decisions, and those are always – people say, well, if you make that decision that will affect the polls if you do this or that – but it cannot just be all about those types of decisions. You have to make decisions that are responsible, and I think that is something the government, it is incumbent on us to do.

We cannot just make those decisions that some would say are easy decisions, that are politically expedient, that will suit our purposes in the short term. We have to make decisions that obviously add value – as I said, I am always going back to the point of adding value – and serve democracy.

I really feel as though the value that the Parliamentary Secretary adds, it certainly adds to the department. It also adds to the access for outside groups being able to access that department, because a minister is only one person. So if you are able to have – in larger departments, as we have said, if you are able to

have another person, a figurehead, if you would, who is able to go out and meet with groups and liaison and attend functions, those types of things, the access is improved as well. Access is a big piece of democracy, and people want to have that access to either their Parliamentary Secretary or minister or MHA. So, all of those points are very important to consider.

I certainly do not support the motion put forward, even though – it is an interesting one to talk about, and I am glad to have the opportunity to do so. I only was told a little while ago I would have an opportunity to speak to this. I think they may have asked me perhaps, I am only guessing, because of my experience as a Parliamentary Secretary. They know how vested I was in it and the work that I put into it.

Like I said, I cannot speak for everyone, but if I could, Mr. Speaker, I would say that every Parliamentary Secretary who sits on this side of the House, as well as the Parliamentary Assistant, former, and former Parliamentary Secretary on that side, added value. Do you know what? They performed the role to their best of their abilities, and I think the system was better because of the jobs they did. I truly believe that.

As I said, I will not be supporting this motion, but it is an interesting conversation to have. I would like to perhaps move it in the direction with increasing the roles of the Parliamentary Secretary and giving them more things to do perhaps. As I said, it would be interesting to go down the road of answering questions in Question Period. I am sure that is not something I can decide, or maybe even we can decide. I do not even know how that would work, but perhaps we should look at expanding the role as opposed to the remuneration piece, because I do not think that is a piece that we, as legislators, in this House of Assembly should be doing. That should be left to an outside group to do, just as it is with salaries, benefits, and pensions of Members of the House of Assembly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to something that I feel pretty strongly about, and I look forward to other comments.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I am glad to have an opportunity to stand on this Private Members' Day and speak to the motion that has been put to the House, the motion urging government to immediately consider terminating compensation for Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be arrogant enough to say that an MHA cannot bring a certain motion forward. Obviously, we all have the right as members of this House to bring motions forward.

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** When I look at the content of what we are dealing with here today, I really have to ask myself, of all the issues that are facing the people in this Province, is this an issue that needs to be in the House of Assembly?

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

**MS MICHAEL:** I mean that very sincerely. It may be an issue that could be a question to the Premier. It may be an issue that could be a question to a minister. It may be an issue that could be the content of a news release.

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** For us to be spending all afternoon talking about Parliamentary Secretaries really upsets me. It is very, very concerning. We have so many issues that we need to be talking about in this House of Assembly.

We have, for example, home care, which is in a mess in this Province – absolutely in a mess in this Province. Why not have that discussion again? Why not have the Official Opposition

put that out on the floor and this time vote for a public home care system, not against one when we brought that private member's motion forward.

Why not put the issue of universal child care and affordable child care here and vote for a system that is a full public system administered by a government, and take care of the needs of the families in this Province? Why aren't we using our time this afternoon discussing that?

We do not need to spend hours discussing whether or not there should be money given to the Parliamentary Secretaries. I mean it just seems to me that we are not using our time here to really get at the issues that are the issues of the people. I do not hear people out on the street asking this question. I do not hear that at all.

I do hear people out on the street talk to me about what is happening in the ER and the hours that they spend in the ER trying to be taken care of. I do hear that. I hear that a lot. I also hear seniors talking to us about the lack of affordable housing.

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** I hear that over and over. Why aren't we talking about that this afternoon? Why wouldn't the Official Opposition want to put that issue on the floor?

It is really interesting when we look at Parliamentary Secretaries. Parliamentary Secretaries have been here in the system since 1982. Yes, they started under a Tory government with Peckford, but they certainly continued with Liberal governments as well.

Neither one of the governments since 1982 looked at Parliamentary Secretaries and said this is something we should get rid of. All the governments since 1982 are – I would like to say to the Member for Bay of Islands, Mr. Speaker, I think he was one himself, wasn't he?

Everybody here has benefitted, both parties have benefitted from Parliamentary Secretaries. They obviously saw them as necessary. I am not debating the value of Parliamentary Secretaries.

I think they have a role to play. I think that both of the parties that have formed the governments in this House have benefitted from them. So why all of a sudden are we getting it put out here the way we are getting it put out today, as I said, when we have so many issues –

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** – that we have to take care of. Mr. Speaker, you do not change systems in the time of an economic downturn. You do not take away things in the system and then in five years' time try to put it back again. That is not the way to do it, and that is what I am seeing talked about here today.

We know, for example, that with the five Parliamentary Secretaries who are now in place, the salaries are about \$118,000. We have not had figures brought in here to show how much more money – they are obviously under ministries. They are not under the House of Assembly, they are under ministries. They share the structure that is in place in the ministries. They are there under the ministerial office and under that structure. There is not a special communications person for a Parliamentary Secretary, for example. They share the system that is there.

The Official Opposition, when they were in government benefitted from that. They know that is how it worked.

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** The government that is there now knows that is how it works. Why are we spending so much time here doing this? I find it just a political move being here this afternoon. I think we need to be doing things.

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Everybody in this House can get into political moves, this one is one this afternoon. It is a cynical political move at a time when we have so many issues.

I would like to hear what the Official Opposition has to say about the issues that are affecting the people. What is their plan for the issues that are affecting people here in the House? If they would do that, I would be very, very happy.

They are just deflecting from having to speak to real issues, Mr. Speaker. They are not putting something out here that shows where they stand on an issue that is affecting the lives of the people.

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

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I ask all members for their co-operation.

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your intervention.

We have heard the Official Opposition pleading the fifth on big issues. Every time you ask where they are standing they choose to take advantage of public dissatisfaction with the Progressive Conservative government.

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Rather than putting their issues out on the floor. I mean that is what we are about here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. There are just so many more important issues the Liberals could have chosen to debate. I have mentioned some of them already. I will need to go on.

Let's talk about diversification of the economy. The government says they want to do it, the Official Opposition says they want to do it. Let's put that out as a private member's motion.

Let's look at the ways in which we could diversify the economy. If we want to have a debate, if we want to have a discussion, let's put

that issue out on the floor. There are also the dangers of privatizing government services.

Now there is something if the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker, wanted to get something going. There is an issue that I have heard from them after the Premier, that does not make me feel very happy. I have not heard very much from the Leader of the Official Opposition saying where they really stand with regard to the privatization of government services. Not just one little piece of government services but –

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

I would respectfully ask the member to speak to the resolution.

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I will be happy to speak to it, Mr. Speaker. These issues that I am talking about are issues I would hope government would be working on, and I would hope that Parliamentary Secretaries would help government work on. These are the issues that government needs to be heard about. If the Official Opposition really wanted to have government speak on the issues they are concerned about, let's get them on the floor.

I am not saying this to back up the Parliamentary Secretaries who are currently in place, or the ones in the past, or the ones in the future; I am talking about it as something that is part of the system. They are part of helping people. They are part of the system that is there to deliver programs. It is not something that is a strange phenomenon in our country. I mean, to use PEI as an example is painful.

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

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

**MS MICHAEL:** PEI is such a small province with such a small group of people and such a small geography. You cannot compare PEI to Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to government being present to people in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very disturbing that we have this going on here today. As I said before, when the Official Opposition was in power, when they were governments, they had Parliamentary Secretaries. They used Parliamentary Secretaries. They used them well, I think, lots of times. They used them very well. People knew who the Parliamentary Secretaries were. I did not hear them complaining about it.

In very difficult times under Wells, Tobin, and Grimes – especially under Grimes when we had a prolonged struggle with the public sector unions – I did not hear them say let's give up Parliamentary Secretaries then. So why are they saying it now? That is the reality. That is why I say it is political move, Mr. Speaker. They did not say it then, but they are saying it now.

It is just politics. It is not something they have shown any commitment to in the past. They are just trying to throw something else out there as a political move in this whole process of dealing with the issues that we are dealing with in the Province right now.

If we are going to make changes in this Province and we are going to take care of the situation that we are in, we have to see how to maintain our system as it is. Not destroy a system, maintain is as it is within the context of the money that exists. That is what we have to do. We have not been good at that in this Province. The governments have not been good at that. That is what we have to do.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have made all the major points I want to make. To use up more time than is necessary, I think is a useless thing to do, so I am not going to do that. I have made the major points. I think the Official Opposition has heard my points. The government has heard my points.

I thank you very much for the time.

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

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

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

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

The hon. the Premier.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to join my colleagues on this side of the House in showing appreciation to the Leader of the Third – sorry the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. I am trying to get it right over there, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, she raises a valid point. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis raised this earlier. Members opposite do not want to hear it, I understand that, but they have brought this motion to the floor today. We have sat over here and we have listened to the debate. I have listened to the debate myself throughout the afternoon, and members have sat and listened.

We know that members opposite like to get up on points of order and like to interrupt when members on this side of the House are trying to speak in debate. They like to do that, Mr. Speaker, but I am okay. If they want to do that, if that is the Liberal way of doing business in the House, they can go right ahead.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, it is an important topic, but as the member opposite said, there are many important things in the Province. This is the first private member's resolution that members opposite had an opportunity to bring to this House.

There are many ways to bring forward their viewpoints on Parliamentary Secretaries and the salaries of Parliamentary Secretaries, Mr. Speaker, and one is to do it this way. It is their day to bring forward a private member's resolution. I guess if this is what they feel is the best use of time, then that is their decision to make, but I do share the sentiments of others who are saying there are probably some other

very important matters that are on the minds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians besides the compensation of Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that the motion is specific only to Parliamentary Secretaries.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Members of the Liberal Opposition, Mr. Speaker, have been given quite a bit of latitude this afternoon. Not only have they talked about Parliamentary Secretaries, but they have also talked about Parliamentary Assistants.

Mr. Speaker, their motion does not even refer to Parliamentary Assistants. Their motion is not about Parliamentary Assistants. They completely left that out for some reason, even though there are two different pieces of legislation, one for secretaries and one for assistants, but they are different.

**MR. KIRBY:** So why talk about it?

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Because you have done it. You have talked about it all afternoon. That is why, I say to the Member for St. John's North.

They have talked about Parliamentary Secretaries. They have actually referred to one – Parliamentary Assistants, sorry, Mr. Speaker, and have talked about that this afternoon when their motion does not even include it.

In their haste, I suppose, of getting this to the House today, they never even thought the concept of including the discussion around Parliamentary Assistants. They certainly did not bring forward a motion that said that we should look at salaries and compensation paid to the Government House Leader, Whips, Caucus Chairs, and other functions within the House, Mr. Speaker.

I have talked about those. I have asked you, the Speaker, to have a look at a number of matters in parliamentary form. I have asked you to look at the salaries because an Opposition House Leader

–

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** – an Opposition Whip, the same as a government Whip, Caucus Chair.

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

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

I ask members for their co-operation.

The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Those roles are generally conducted only while the House is open. So members opposite receive compensation all year long for doing roles such as Opposition House Leader, but, Mr. Speaker –

**MR. HILLIER:** So do all your teachers (inaudible).

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Don't worry now, I say to the Member for Conception Bay South.

**MR. HILLIER:** (Inaudible).

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

I say to the Member for Conception Bay South, the Speaker has called for order.

**MR. HILLIER:** I apologize.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Opposition House Leader, as an example – I do not mean to pick on him. I am not picking on him personally; it is just a position. They receive their compensation as Whips do. The Whip on our side of the House does too. The Caucus Chair on our side of the House does, as well, receive compensation all year long for roles. I use the Opposition House Leader because that one particularly is a role that is played only while the House is open – unless he sits here in the House all by himself when the

House is not open, but he gets compensated all year long for it.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** They are making jokes over there so maybe this is not that important to them, Mr. Speaker, and they are making light of it.

Mr. Speaker, when I introduced the concepts of parliamentary reform, I asked the House of Assembly to look at pensions. For the people at home who are watching, government does not control the pensions of MHAs. It is now being done by an independent process. Mr. Green, who did the full review, a very comprehensive review of the operations of the House of Assembly said we have to take compensation benefits out of the hands of politicians. There is an independent process that does that. I have asked the House to engage that process, to look at pensions for MHAs the same way we, as a government, have done with our public servants.

I have also asked that the day-to-day operations be reviewed, Mr. Speaker. I have also, in agreement after members of both other parties, the Third Party, the NDP, the Liberal Party and our party all agreed that we should have a fewer number of seats in the House. Then, what we did, I said well, let's do it now. If we all agree, we should do it. Let's get on it because if we do not do it now, it will not take effect for another four years.

Just recently, the Member for Conception Bay South, who likes to get his jabs going over there, I saw him on one of the TV shows saying that even though he did not agree with it he voted for it anyway. His basis for doing that, Mr. Speaker, was it was going to pass. It was going to pass anyway, so he voted for it. I look forward to him voting in favour of the upcoming Budget and other motions that we bring to the House.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite have talked about compensation for Parliamentary Secretaries. They have also talked about Parliamentary Assistants, even though it is not part of their motion. Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand that they play a critical role. I have taken the steps to reduce the Cabinet. I

have done that. I have reduced Cabinet and I have said I am not reducing Parliamentary Secretaries and I am going to compensate them for the extra work that they do.

Members opposite can talk about this all they want but, to the best of my knowledge, there are members opposite who receive other compensation from government – at least one that I have been told about. I do not have any records to prove it or anything, but it has been suggested to me. The Member for St. John's North receives compensation for – or has been in the past while he was an MHA – his work at Memorial University. I have not heard any different, that he no longer receives compensation.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I will tell you what it has to do with.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I will say what it has to do with it, Mr. Speaker. He has asked, so I will tell him. Because this afternoon members opposite in the Liberal Party have said that MHAs get paid a salary so they should do the extra work as Parliamentary Secretaries without any compensation. That is what it has to do with it. Yet, the Member for St. John's North receives compensation from Memorial University – working at Memorial University – while he is a full-time MHA. He receives compensation from government from two ways. It is okay for him to do that, but it not okay for Parliamentary Secretaries who spend time in departments, similar to what ministers do, time away from their districts, Mr. Speaker. They work longer hours. They travel more. Their role as MHAs, as Parliamentary Secretaries, is more akin to what ministers do, in the lives of ministers who spend a lot of time away from home and away from their districts more so than a person who is not a Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Speaker.

Now we know in November 2000, the Liberal Premier of the day, Premier Tulk, appointed a number of Parliamentary Secretaries. He did that; he appointed a number of Parliamentary Secretaries. He appointed four Parliamentary Secretaries and also a Parliamentary Assistant –

oh no, Mr. Speaker, that is not right; I stand corrected. He appointed four Parliamentary Secretaries and he appointed two Parliamentary Assistants to the Premier is what he did back in 2000 – two Parliamentary Assistants to the Premier.

Furthermore, in 2001, when the new Liberal Premier, Premier Grimes, appointed his new Cabinet, February 13, 2001 – I printed this off the website myself today, so it is all there, as much of the information is on the Internet. Premier Grimes at the time appointed a nineteen-person Cabinet, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Nineteen members of Cabinet he appointed on that day, Mr. Speaker. Now, some of them previously were Parliamentary Secretaries appointed by the previous Premier. Because quite often, Parliamentary Secretaries are seen as a stepping stone, a learning process for the development of MHAs to take up a role in departments, and also to move towards becoming ministers.

At the same time, he also appointed a Parliamentary Assistant and four Parliamentary Secretaries. So that is nineteen and one and four, that is twenty-four members of his caucus that he appointed either as Cabinet ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, or a Parliamentary Assistant.

It is not without precedent to have Parliamentary Secretaries. Now, what I have done is I have reduced the size of my Cabinet. I reduced the size of my Cabinet to a low number. I heard the number today fourteen – there is one Cabinet minister who takes only half a salary; he takes the Parliamentary Assistant's salary because of the role that he takes, so there is thirteen-and-a-half I heard someone say today – took fourteen today –

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I know, Mr. Speaker, they cannot help themselves across the hall when I am trying to participate in their debate, but they



can go ahead and make their comments all they want, I will continue to make my points –

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** There they go again, Mr. Speaker. At least they are speaking up louder now so the microphones and the people at home can hear them.

Mr. Speaker, we have now reduced our Cabinet. I have reduced the Cabinet down to fourteen. One of the things that I want to do, one of the things that concerned me and was on my mind, was ensuring that the work continued to happen, that the work and responsibilities of ministers continued to take place. When we make changes and we make adjustments to how we do business, quite often we do a curve. The same as we are doing – I talked about in the House yesterday in child care. We have a ten-year plan, and we cannot go from here to here overnight. We do it over a ten-year period. So we have a curve where we continue to implement new programs and we try and improve and develop a service.

Well, I am taking much the same approach. Instead of going and cutting everything out – they know a lot about that in the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, they know a lot about cutting out, making big cuts over there. Instead of doing that, we are taking a progressive way of doing this. I have reduced the Cabinet. I am keeping the Parliamentary Secretaries in place, and I am going to compensate them for the work they do, Mr. Speaker, because they do work hard. They spend time away from their district. That is extra hours and effort they have to work in because of the responsibilities given to them by the ministers they work with, and they are compensated for it, and so they should.

It is no different than a House Leader, a Deputy House Leader, a Whip, a caucus Chair, is compensated, Mr. Speaker, for extra responsibilities and duties they have, even though I think they should be compensated while they are executing those duties. In the case of House Leaders, they should not be compensated all year long for the number of weeks and months that we actually sit in the House. That is my own personal belief, Mr. Speaker.

Parliamentary Secretaries play that role all year long. There is no stopping. There is no time to say, well, you are not going to be the Parliamentary Secretary for the next three months or during the summer months. You are still that during the time the House is sitting, or when the House is not sitting.

So, Mr. Speaker, my point is that there is a difference. There is a difference in what they do. Yes, different provinces have different set-ups and different designs and different salaries.

I know when Judge Brazil did her most recent look into compensation and benefits – which is done for the House of Assembly, an independent person brought in to do the review. I think at that point in time we were sixth in the country on salaries. I stand to be corrected, but I think if memory serves me correctly we were sixth out of provinces.

Some people have referred to what has taken place in Alberta, where there was a reduction in MHA compensation, Mr. Speaker. I would say to you that compensation for MHAs, or for MLAs, as it is in Alberta, is much higher. They have had several increases in a number of years, when members of this House had been frozen for several years. I think since about 2007, and I think there was actually – I am looking around to members to tell me if I am right or wrong. There was actually a rollback from 2006-2007. It has been frozen ever since then. We have not had any increases in remuneration; yet, Mr. Speaker, we continue to do the work.

I can tell you as Premier, and I have said this a number of times, we have a lot of work to do. There are no two ways about it. Is the world in our Province perfect the way it is? It is certainly not. We still have work to do. There is work to be done by departments and ministers, supported in some of the more challenging, difficult, and complex roles that ministers have. They are supported by Parliamentary Secretaries who are elected Members of the House of Assembly. They represent their own districts and their own constituents, but they also agreed to take on extra roles.

In some of those departments, I know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, some of those roles are extensive. They are high workloads. There is a high

demand on them, very similar in some cases, not a lot different from what ministers have as well. They should be compensated for it. Clear and simple, they should be compensated for it.

I have no problem in supporting the compensation they do receive. It is part of what has been an established practice in the House for a very long time, Mr. Speaker. While we take steps to change the House of Assembly and reform the House of Assembly, the day-to-day operations, the intention of the reform of the day-to-day operations – you know this, Mr. Speaker, yourself – was to create an opportunity for greater participation by all MHAs in the House representing all parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, to give them a larger role in debate and find a better way forward.

One is to ensure that we provide the best legislation possible. That is my goal. Let's have a system that works in our House of Assembly, that provides better opportunity to get better legislation. That is not up to us as a government to do. That is not up to me as the Premier to do. That is for the House of Assembly to decide.

I have encouraged and asked, through your office, that the House of Assembly do that. Again, to review pensions of MHAs, the day-to-day operations that I just mentioned, and also the reduction in the number of seats for the House of Assembly – which that process, thankfully, is underway.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against removing the salaries for Parliamentary Secretaries. I think there have been good points and cases made today on why they should continue. I look forward to the opportunity to vote.

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

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

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

I would like to speak to some of the points that have been made around the House. I will start with the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. She stood up and said this was a waste of time, but she took eleven minutes to say it was a waste of time before she sat down.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a waste of time.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** We are talking about, over the course of four years, \$540,000; every term that government sits, plus the pensions that are accumulated –

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** – as a result of those extra salaries. So it is a significant amount of money.

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

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

Again, I ask all members for their co-operation.

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

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

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

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

We are talking about a significant amount of money. Mr. Speaker, \$540,000 over the term each and every term is what we are talking about, and the pensions associated with those extra salaries as well. It is a significant amount of money. I think it is worthy of a discussion here.

We were criticized for bringing it up in a two-hour debate; yet, Mr. Speaker, we have asked questions in the House on this very topic and we did not get satisfactory answers. We have talked about it in the media.

The best way for us to deal with this at this particular point is to bring it to the floor and force it to a vote. It is two hours. We are saying that a two-hour debate is not worth \$540,000 and the additional pensions that are associated with that over the course of a term? I cannot believe that members would say that is not

worthy of a two-hour debate. That is unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that Parliamentary Secretaries do good work. I am not disputing that. There are forty-eight members currently in this Assembly and I think that every member who ran, ran with the intention of doing the work for their districts, and doing the best they can for the people of this Province. I am not disputing that the Parliamentary Secretaries do good work. Absolutely not, I think that they do. I think they do good work, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier just stood and talked about other paid positions. He raised the fact that there should be a look at other paid positions in this Assembly, and he has asked you to do that, Mr. Speaker. I say that is good, we commend that. Those positions should be looked at. I think they should be looked at.

The Premier himself has said we are in a time of fiscal restraint. The Finance Minister has said we are in a time of fiscal restraint. There could be five more deficits coming – five more annual deficits over the next five years. They have gone to the point, Mr. Speaker, of saying there are too many members in the House. Forty-eight members is too many, we have to cut it back to forty. Now the Premier dictated that number. In fact, he said thirty-eight. Through an amendment by this side of the House, we said somewhere between thirty-eight and forty-two, but the Premier decided on forty.

Mr. Speaker, we are being told we need to do more work and we need fewer members in the House to do more work because of fiscal restraint. Fair enough. So the Premier also said he is going to reduce Cabinet. He reduced it by two-and-a-half positions. Ironically, there are four Parliamentary Secretaries and a Parliamentary Assistant who each received half a minister's salary. Five people times half a minister's salary is two-and-a-half positions.

It is sensible to cut two-and-a-half ministerial positions, but it is not sensible to cut five Parliamentary Secretary salaries? We are not saying to cut the positions. They do good work. If we are going to look at reducing the number of seats in the Legislature from forty-eight to

forty, and we are all going to take on a little bit of extra work, and we are going to look at the paid positions, it is important enough, the Premier raised that – we are going to look at the paid positions for House Leaders, Whips, and Chairs, yet we are not going to look at the paid positions for Parliamentary Secretaries or Assistants.

Well it does not add up. I will tell you why that is, Mr. Speaker. You have been asked to look at the other paid positions. I want to talk about that for a second before I go back to the point I was about to make. This is the place, because it is Cabinet that determines how much salary Parliamentary Assistants and Parliamentary Secretaries get. It is not the Speaker of the House. It is not the Management Commission.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the independent commission that was appointed to review MHA salaries and allowances. They have no mandate to look at the remuneration for Parliamentary Secretaries or Parliamentary Assistants. They are not mandated with that. We all know that in here because we dealt with that report. We voted on it in the House.

We know that in this House we cannot vote on reducing the remuneration for a party Whip, or a Chair of caucus, or House Leader. We cannot do that in this House because that is not the way the legislation is done. The Speaker of the House and the Management Commission look at that.

The Speaker said he was going to refer that to you. Fair enough. We are in agreement with that. Let's do that. How do we deal with the salaries of Parliamentary Assistants and Parliamentary Secretaries? Well again, it is not the review commission that looked at the compensation, or the review committee that looked at compensation for members, and it is not the Management Commission.

The Management Commission cannot dictate what the legislation very clearly states. That legislation, Mr. Speaker, very clearly states – and I will read it because it is in legislation. It very clearly states that Parliamentary Secretaries and Parliamentary Assistants, because it is two pieces of legislation: shall be paid a salary at an annual rate to be fixed by Cabinet. Not by the

Speaker, not by the Management Commission, not by the Members' Compensation Review Committee, but by Cabinet.

We have asked the questions in the House. Despite what the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi might say that it is not important enough to save \$540,000 plus the pensions associated with that money every single term. That is not worth two hours according to her.

We have asked questions in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We have raised it in the media.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** How do we give this issue the attention that it deserves? Well we brought it to a two-hour debate. It is two hours, Mr. Speaker, to determine over the next term a savings of well over \$500,000 when you add the pensions on top of that. I think it is worth two hours. Anybody in this House who says it is not has a different agenda.

I am going to get back to the point I was about to make on why that issue has not been addressed. By referring to the Speaker, which goes to the Management Commission, to look at salaries for Caucus Chairs, Caucus Whips, and so on, well, we know when the next election is going to be, it is about six months from now. By the time the Speaker and the Management Commission get through that, vote on it, and then bring it back to the House well, you know what, it may be a month, maybe two that people might be affected. That is not going to upset the apple cart for government. We know that, but bring it on, get it done. Let's get it done, Mr. Speaker, with the least amount of time wasted and look at salary positions.

The reason, Mr. Speaker, Parliamentary Assistants and Parliamentary Secretaries have not been a topic of the Premier is because those are five paid positions in his volatile caucus. That caucus is a volatile caucus right now and that is reality.

The people of the Province say it. Every poll that has come out, Mr. Speaker, in the past year has said it. We know –

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** – they cannot afford to rock the boat over there. They will blame us and the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi will say that this is only politics. Well no, it is not only politics. The reality, Mr. Speaker, right here in this House is that if we need to cut two-and-a-half ministers, and five Parliamentary Assistants and Parliamentary Secretaries combined is the same salary as two-and-a-half ministers, well then it is worthy of a discussion. It is certainly worthy of two hours of debate in this Assembly. I do not think that is too much to ask, not at all.

Let's talk about the roles of Parliamentary Assistants and Parliamentary Secretaries. I will be the first say they do perform a valuable role. They do good work.

Mr. Speaker, we will just have a look for a moment, because I want to look at – and it was Premier Peckford who brought these positions into place initially. He said a little over a week ago in his speech in 1982, he announced his Administration's intention to introduce legislation – or 1970, I am sorry – into the session of the House of Assembly to create the position of Parliamentary Secretaries for ministers.

He went on to say that he believed this was a valuable training ground for future Cabinet ministers. Fair enough. Do you know what? My guess is, that with or without pay, if somebody was invited to be a Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Speaker, knowing that it was a stepping ground, training ground to be a Cabinet minister, that they were being very seriously considered to become a member of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and make very serious, very important decisions on behalf of the people of the Province, most people would not say no.

Now that is one point. If we look at that they will respond to questions in the House of Assembly, that is not the case. That was the

intention, but it is not the case. It is not reality. That is not what happens.

Mr. Speaker, they will attend Cabinet committee meetings. I can tell you that is not the case either. It has not been the practice, and is not the case. They will attend Cabinet committee meetings and ensure they are thoroughly familiar with the work of ministers. They will assist ministers in departmental management and in policy co-ordination at the Cabinet committee level.

Mr. Speaker, Parliamentary Secretaries today are not what they were set out to be initially. They do valuable work, and ministers are busy, there is no doubt about. They help out ministers. We are certainly not disputing that.

Let's have a look – because you look at other provinces with much larger populations than ours, we were criticized for looking at the other Atlantic Provinces. We only referred to the other Atlantic Provinces. They are the closest provinces to us. While their populations are larger in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, they are smaller in PEI, fair enough, but they are closer in size – much larger populations.

In Newfoundland and Labrador there are fourteen ministers. Of those fourteen ministers, you are allowed a maximum of four Parliamentary Secretaries and one Parliamentary Assistant. How many do we have? Of the five we have five, Mr. Speaker. We have five – that is right – who are paid.

Let's have a look at PEI. They have eight ministers. Now, no doubt, it is a smaller geography and smaller population. I get it. They have eight ministers. So we will not focus too much on PEI, although they do not have any paid Parliamentary Secretaries.

We will have a look at Nova Scotia; a considerably larger population than Newfoundland and Labrador, similar geography I will say. They have fifteen ministers. We have fourteen here. How many paid Parliamentary Secretaries? Does anybody on this side know?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** None.

**MR. OSBORNE:** None.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Zero.

**MR. OSBORNE:** That is right, zero. Their Parliamentary Secretaries –

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** No, they are not paid, Mr. Speaker.

In New Brunswick, again, they have a similar geography and a larger population. I do not know the exact numbers but I think it is 700,000-something in New Brunswick and we are 520,000-530,000. So they have a much larger population, similar geography.

They have thirteen ministers. We have fourteen here. The Premier will try to convince you that our ministers are now overworked, overburdened, they need Parliamentary Secretaries.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Do you know what? I am not saying we do not need them. What I am saying is if the other Atlantic Provinces are not paying those positions, why are we? New Brunswick has thirteen ministers; we have fourteen.

If the Premier were truly concerned about the workload that his ministers carry, let's have a look at the workloads in the other Atlantic Provinces.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** In Newfoundland and Labrador the Premier is responsible, in addition to the role as Premier, of being President of Executive Council. That is it: Premier and President of Executive Council.

In New Brunswick, the Premier is the Premier; President of Executive Council; Chair of the New Brunswick Jobs Board; Minister Responsible for Innovation – oh, he is a minister

too. Oh, two ministerial portfolios: Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs – hang on now: Minister Responsible for Women’s Equity; Minister Responsible for Rural Affairs; Minister Responsible for the Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons.

Now, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, the Premier in each of these provinces has ministerial duties, Mr. Speaker.

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

I remind the member his time for speaking has expired.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you very much. I think I have made my points.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde, to close the debate.

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

I thoroughly enjoyed the debate this afternoon. I want to thank the Member for Cape St. Francis, the Member for CBS, the Member for Terra Nova, the Member for Signal Hills – Quidi Vidi, the Premier, and the Member for St. John’s South, for taking part in this afternoons debate.

Mr. Speaker, the question this afternoon in the two-hour period was about taxpayers’ money. It was interesting to hear first off the Member for Cape St. Francis say he enjoyed the job so much he really do not want, or did not need extra compensation to do the job. That is admirable, Mr. Speaker, because after all we are debating taxpayers’ money.

The Member for Terra Nova, who actually was a Parliamentary Secretary for two years, now he had graduated to being a minister, said when he was the Parliamentary Secretary he attended a lot of dinners and other events on behalf of the minister. It is important to also point out in today’s debate that a minister also has another position that no other member of this House has. A minister has an executive assistant who also is

responsible to do a lot of these things on behalf of the minister.

One of the most amazing things this afternoon to me was the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. I have been in this House, actual sitting days now, probably less than a dozen. Day after day, I have seen the Member for St. John’s Centre stand up in this House and talk about the violence prevention court, a \$500,000 a year expenditure; 25 per cent of that money could have been saved here this afternoon, but the member is going to stand up this afternoon and vote against saving \$135,000 for Newfoundland and Labrador’s taxpayers.

Then, unfortunately, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi said we are wasting our time, two hours – two hours – \$135,000 is not worth two hours of our time here in this House. Well, Mr. Speaker, do you know what two hours equates to this afternoon? It equates to \$562 a minute. Imagine, we could save the taxpayers of this Province \$562 a minute for those two hours we are here this afternoon – unreal, Mr. Speaker.

**MS MICHAEL:** A point or order, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, on a point of order.

**MS MICHAEL:** I questioned the member’s valuing how much is spent a minute for us to be here. This is the democratic process. Is he saying that we do not spend money on the democratic process? I beg to differ.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

There is no point of order.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

I am really astonished this afternoon to see the government applauding the Leader of the Third Party. It is amazing – the money tree, I guess.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, \$135,000 – the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, \$125,000 a year funding from the government; CNIB, \$100,000; Planned Parenthood, only \$25,000; Canadian Cancer Society, \$96,000; Canadian paraplegic society, \$110,000; Coalition for Persons with Disabilities, last year's estimates, \$34,000; Heart and Stroke Foundation, \$70,000; Planned Parenthood – Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, \$64,000; Northern Regional Wellness Coalition, \$43,000; Parkinson Society, \$25,000; Stella Burry Community Services, \$25,000; Seniors Resource Centre, \$100,000 –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Is this relevant?

**MR. CROCKER:** I tell the member, it is relevant because these are things that we could do with the \$135,000 we could save by eliminating the pay for Parliamentary Secretaries. So there is the relevance, Mr. Speaker.

It has been great to take the time this afternoon to debate this motion. It is an important motion. Any time we have an opportunity, as elected officials in this Province to save taxpayers' money, to put less money on our children's credit card – every time we haul that credit card out as a government, as we stand here, for people who elected us and trusted us with their credit card, I do not think \$135,000 does not matter. That is what I have heard here this afternoon from the government, from the Premier himself. I heard it from the Leader of the Third Party that –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Co-leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, the co-leader of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at this and realize we can save this money and we can do it today –

we talk about other circumstances, about reducing pay for other House management positions. It is my understanding that the letter has already come to you for that review to happen. So that review is in process.

Now all of a sudden this afternoon when we can save that money and we can save it today, there is no will to save it. There is no will to save that money, Mr. Speaker, for our children and for the people of this Province.

If there is one task we have in this House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, it is to protect the taxpayers' money. Where I come from, \$138,000 is a lot of money.

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** Oh, that is \$500,000, I tell the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** Family violence court.

**MR. CROCKER:** You could have the family violence court back, I say to the Member for –

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** All of them. I just listed them all, I tell the Member for Bay of Islands, what this money could do.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, that is not the priority of the government. It is obviously not the priority of the Third Party who stands up day after day and talk about the family violence court. Obviously where is that?

I look forward to the next time we hear a petition about the family violence court, Mr. Speaker. We could this afternoon have saved \$125,000-plus for the taxpayers of this Province, \$500,000 for the taxpayers of this Province over a term of government. That is no chump change.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and I guess we will have a vote on the motion.

Thank you very much for the opportunity this afternoon.

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

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

Is the House ready for the vote?

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The resolution is defeated.

On motion, resolution defeated.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

Summon the members.

### Division

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

Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

**CLERK:** Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Lane, Mr. Reid, Mr. Hillier, Mr. Flynn, Mr. Crocker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against the motion, please stand.

**CLERK:** Mr. Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Dalley, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Granter, Mr. Littlejohn, Ms Perry, Ms Sullivan, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Russell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Hunter, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. McGrath, Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, Ms Rogers.

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

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

**CLERK:** Mr. Speaker, the ayes: fourteen; the nays: twenty-eight.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I declare the motion defeated.

This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, the business of the House now concluded, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 o'clock.