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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers

I would just like to take a minute to welcome everybody back to the House of Assembly. I was not really expecting to see you all so soon, but welcome.

**Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Bay of Islands; the Member for the District of St. John's North; the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South; the Member for the District of Bonavista South; the Member for the District of Port de Grave; and the Member for the District of Labrador West.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bay of Islands.

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Lisa Young, a teacher at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Curling.

Lisa is the Physical Education teacher at the school and is a true proponent of healthy living and physical activity. She is always promoting ways to ensure her students have the opportunity to be involved in various physical activities, achieve their personal best while developing self-esteem and confidence.

Lisa is a teacher sponsor for three school teams, co-ordinates the school's intramural programs, organizes a primary division skating program and special events such as the Terry Fox Run, Walk for Breakfast and other sporting activities. She is also a coach with the Silver Blades Figure Skating Club in Corner Brook.

I know, first hand, the difference Lisa has made in her students' lives in her approach to sports, education and the well-being of her students.

In recognition of her continued commitment in helping her students and encouraging them to become physically active, Lisa was named the

District Physical Educator of the Year for the western region by the Physical Education Special Interest Council of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Lisa on receiving this prestigious award and commend her for her contribution to students' life at her school. Well done, Lisa.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a group of volunteers in the District of St. John's North who are making a difference in the lives of their neighbours and in our community.

The Wishingwell Road – Algerine Place Tenant Association was founded about seventeen years ago. From the beginning, one of the aims of the association was to brighten up the Christmas season for families in their neighbourhood. They have grown their Christmastime volunteer activity from providing a single food hamper for one family to providing about thirty food hampers each year and these offerings include turkey and vegetables for a traditional Christmas Day meal, as well as gifts for children.

Over the past seventeen years, many people have contributed their time to the association. In recent years, the core volunteer group has included Lillian Parmenter, Helen Caines, Sharon Clarke, and Carol Clarke. When I dropped by to visit them, Mr. Speaker, just before Christmas I noted that Mrs. Parmenter's hallway was stacked with boxes as they were just about to assemble their Christmas hampers.

I ask all hon. members to join me in thanking Lillian, Helen, Sharon, and Carol and recognizing the efforts of the Wishingwell – Algerine Place Tenant Association.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, on February 5, the City of Mount Pearl will come alive with the fun and excitement which is the thirty-third annual Mount Pearl Frosty Festival.

This year's festival will be jam packed with many events and activities for people of all ages and interests. Some of this year's highlights include: an opening night extravaganza, three community breakfasts, an Irish pub night, Frosty lip sync, Battle of the Brains, Frosty movie night, an old fashioned jiggs dinner and variety show, comedy night, a dinner theatre featuring Spirit of Newfoundland, and a concert and dance featuring Shanneyganok, the Irish Descendants, and Siochana.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you can appreciate, any festival of this magnitude would not be possible if not for the hard work of many. I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the City of Mount Pearl, Frosty Festival Board of Directors, the various community groups and organizations, the corporate sponsors, and all of the community-minded volunteers who will be contributing to this year's festival, and encourage all residents and non-residents alike to come out and enjoy the many activities planned for Frosty Festival 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**MR. LITTLE:** Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, I would like to commend the members of the Portland-Jamestown-Winter Brook Recreation Committee and its volunteers on their outstanding work and commitment in developing the Jordan Wells Memorial Playground in memory of a young man who tragically passed away in February of 2012.

The committee has spent countless hours fundraising and hosting events for this special project with assistance from programs and donations from individuals, businesses, and corporate sponsors. Their dedication to create

an outdoor area of recreation and play for children of the local service district is superb. The committee also has future plans of a park for family fun days and a walking trail for people of all ages to enjoy.

Many people from the surrounding communities volunteered to help make this adventure a success. This committee and its volunteers have demonstrated that when people work together, substantial projects can be achieved.

Honourable colleagues, please join me in acknowledging the Portland-Jamestown-Winter Brook Recreation Committee: Jackie Dean, Remanda Muggridge, Janice O'Brien, Lisa Skeffington, Joanne Reid, Donna Frye, and its many volunteers for their continued dedication, hard work, and many accomplishments, and all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise today in this House to recognize St. Peter's Anglican Church in Upper Island Cove on their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The present church, built in 1890, is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

A celebration of this occasion took place yesterday with a special service and anniversary dinner. The occasion was celebrated with the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Most Reverend Frederick Hiltz, who was born and raised in Nova Scotia. Accompanying the Archbishop was Bishop the Right Reverend Dr. Geoff Peddle for Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador.

In his address to the congregation, the Archbishop spoke of the dedication and perseverance of those individuals who created the foundation of the church in Upper Island Cove. Speaking about the church and its wooden structure, he mused about the people, those master carpenters whose hands and skills created some of the intricate detail found

throughout the church. He referred to the church as the rock of the community much like Peter was referred in the Bible as being the rock. It is a gathering place where people have come to worship for two centuries.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the St. Peter's Anglican Church on 200 years of history and Christian faith.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**MR. MCGRATH:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Makaila Hudson, a sixteen-year-old Level II student at Menihek High in Labrador City. This year will be Makaila's third year as a member of the Cross Country Newfoundland and Labrador Ski Team. Involved in many local and community sports, she has represented Labrador West and our Province in her athletic pursuits.

This season will be Makaila's busiest yet as a member of the Menihek Nordic Ski Club. She attended dry land training camps in Corner Brook, Eastport and Gros Morne this summer. This fall she participated in training camps in Alberta, the Labrador Snow Camp, and the Labrador Open Races. She just returned from the World Junior Trials in Ontario placing eighth overall.

This weekend she attended the Newfoundland and Labrador Team Selection Races in Corner Brook for the Canada Winter Games. She will also be participating in the Eastern Championships in Quebec, Provincial Championships in Clarendville, National Championships in Ontario, and the Canada Winter Games, if selected, in British Columbia. She will finish her season this year at home skiing the Great Labrador Loppet.

Mckayla Hudson is an inspiring young athlete and an inspiration to the youth in our Province. I ask that all colleagues in this House join me in wishing Mckayla the best in this season.

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

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

#### Statements by Ministers

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

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

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to provide an update on the success of the Premier's Summit on Health Care which took place on Wednesday of last week. It was my privilege to join the Premier and over 300 delegates to discuss real issues faced by residents and health care providers in Newfoundland and Labrador today. Attendees included residents, researchers, health care professionals, representatives from the regional health authorities and the education system, and a vast and inclusive array of organizations and key stakeholders. I would also recognize members of this hon. House from all parties who joined us for this daylong event.

Feedback obtained from thirteen regional consultations held from Mount Pearl to Happy Valley-Goose Bay helped set the agenda for the summit. Numerous other methods including online and written submissions have also been utilized and the wealth of information obtained is already proving to be an extremely valuable resource.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Summit has allowed us to identify a number of key areas of consensus on which we must place greater emphasis moving forward. These areas include the need for interdisciplinary primary health care teams in our communities, shared electronic health records, improved access to health care services and supports, improved collaboration and co-ordination and a renewed focus on health promotion and disease prevention.

During the day we also saw a renewed focus on the theme of taking an "upstream" approach to systemic challenges within our health care system. Integrating this approach, which has been part of the work of the provincial government for a number of years, puts a focus on the underlying root cause of any problem –

such as the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes or obesity, rather than treating the issue on the surface, over and over again. A number of participants discussed the concept, including guess speaker Dr. Ryan Meili.

Mr. Speaker, another key theme considered was the effect of the social determinants of health which include where people are born, grow, live, work and age. Applying a “Health in All Policies” lens across government is a direction we will certainly consider as we move forward.

As another key outcome of the summit, we announced the expansion of our Primary Health Care Advisory Committee through the addition of representation from the general public. Those interested in being considered for this opportunity are asked to contact the department for more information.

The Premier’s Summit on Health Care provided an opportunity for all participants to make their views known and to build strong and lasting partnerships between government, stakeholders and residents. As we move forward in the development of a primary health care framework, we will continue to strive to create real and lasting change for the benefit of all residents in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, attended this summit and I was certainly very impressed with the quality of comments and the level of expertise in the room. These people should be commended for taking their time to contribute to such an important topic. My only hope is that the information collected does not get put into a report that is stored on a shelf somewhere.

The only thing the Office of Public Engagement did not poll was the level of skepticism in the room, and for good reason. Back in 2003, there was a primary health care framework completed

by the department. This government then, in 2006, cut the Office of Primary Health Care. Provinces across Canada have done significant work in primary health care but this government has failed to provide any direction. It has been eight years since they cut the Office of Primary Health Care, but I am glad they have acknowledged the error in their ways.

I want to see a new plan. It has to happen. I look forward to seeing the results.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It was my pleasure to attend the Premier’s Summit on Health Care last week. I, too, learned a great deal from listening to people talk of their experiences and ideas for change in primary health care, and also hearing them express their frustration with more consultations and their wish for action.

I am glad the minister is committing to bring back the program that set up primary health care teams across the Province until it was dropped by this government a decade ago. I want to remind the minister that the 2003 report on mobilizing primary health care provides already an existing blueprint for how to build a primary health care framework and I suggest to him that he does not have to reinvent the wheel.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House to note our government’s commitment to supporting

innovation in the provincial seafood sector through our Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program. Originally launched in 2007, this program will soon reach the significant milestone of having supported 300 research and development projects.

Mr. Speaker, research and development plays a key role in helping any industry adapt to changing conditions and stay competitive in the marketplace. The Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program supports new developments in the areas of harvesting, fish farming, processing, and marketing by providing funding that fosters innovation among industry players.

To date, more than 270 research and development projects have been made possible through the provincial government's commitment of \$16 million to the program. This funding has helped industry pursue valuable research, often in partnership with organizations like the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation and the Marine Institute.

Mr. Speaker, this government's support of research and development in the seafood industry enhances job opportunities, promotes economic growth, and provides brighter futures for families and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Examples of initiatives that have received Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities funding include: the development shrimp trawls that are more energy efficient and have less contact with the seabed; research into new processing technology that can increase product yield, product quality, and energy efficiency; and the pursuit of new marketing initiatives that are helping the provincial aquaculture industry build new clientele in various parts of the world, and helping the sealing industry pursue clients in Asia.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial seafood industry has generated \$1 billion annually for the past several years, and is a key driver of the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. The industry is subject to change, challenge, and international competition on a continuous basis and our government continues to help industry adapt and

succeed with supports like the Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program.

As a government, we look forward to continued collaboration with industry that builds on the strong reputation that Newfoundland and Labrador seafood already enjoys on the world stage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Research and development is important in any industry, especially in the seafood industry, and we should support these initiatives. It is not simply good enough for this government to rest on their laurels on a research and development component as their greatest achievement.

As the minister indicated, the industry generated \$1 billion this past year; but again, I remind this government that in 1992, nearly twenty-three years ago under a Liberal government, the industry was worth \$1 billion. It is clear that this government has failed to grow this important industry. Our fishery could be worth so much more.

I say to government, we have to do more for the fishery. That is one small aspect; we need to think big. This government has not done that. They have failed to grow this fishery by the lack of vision and missed opportunities. Amid all these failures regarding our fisheries since 2003, we have a government that is now trying to use FTNOP to distract from the uncertainties this government has plunged us into.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We all support innovation in the seafood sector and, for that matter, in all sectors of the economy in this Province. The timing of this release is interesting as government's disagreement with the federal government over the \$400 million CETA agreement is currently ongoing.

The minister is talking of \$16 million invested in 270 projects in this statement. I ask the minister: If the federal government proceeds with CETA as it has planned and the \$400 million agreement with the federal government does not materialize, does the Province still plan to honour its own commitment to invest \$120 million share of the original agreement?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

#### Oral Questions

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

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

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

In March 2013, Premier Dunderdale announced that due to the fiscal situation of the Province she was cutting one Cabinet position and reducing the number of Executive officials in government by ten. She said these cuts would save \$1.5 million a year. Additionally, former Premier Williams announced a leaner Cabinet in 2003, saying that they were leading by example during those significant fiscal challenges.

I ask the Premier: Given the current fiscal situation of our Province, will you lead by example and immediately cut the size of your Cabinet by three members?

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

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

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

I thank the hon. member opposite for his question. We are very cognizant of the very serious fiscal challenges that we face as a government and not only as a government, but as a Province. I can tell you, as I have said publicly before and I have said several times before, that all options are on the table – all options are on the table.

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

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

**MR. BALL:** The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that all options are still on the table, and we are still not realizing the significant savings that it would have for people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, also, Nova Scotia does not have parliamentary secretaries, PEI does not have parliamentary secretaries, New Brunswick does not have parliamentary secretaries, but our Premier has five parliamentary secretaries in this government.

So I ask the Premier: Given the current situation of your government, will you immediately cut those five parliamentary secretaries?

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

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

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

When I say that everything is on the table, all options are on the table, Mr. Speaker, that means everything. That means everything is on the table. Just last week I announced what we intended to do with the size of the House of Assembly.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, has clearly said he agrees and supports the reduction in the size of the House of Assembly. He said it on TV yesterday afternoon. Now, we did see a flip-flop on him before Thursday night was over, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if he wants to hold the line on his position or not, but I can tell you, for us over here on this side of the House –

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** – all options are on the table. All options are on the table.

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

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

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

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

No flip-flop, Mr. Speaker, I would say, because two years ago in March 2013, I spoke about reducing the size of the House of Assembly. Where was this minister – where was the Premier at that time, I say?

On September 30, the Premier increased the size of his Cabinet – increased the size of the Cabinet to fifteen ministers, then on November 27 he announced a hiring freeze and a cut to discretionary spending, but he did not cut the size of Cabinet or did not cut parliamentary secretaries.

So I ask the Premier: Since you could have saved millions of dollars by cutting your Cabinet and cutting parliamentary secretaries, why have you not implemented those reductions?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have said it twice and I will say it again that all options are on the table. I will remind the member opposite that just last week when I was talking about reducing the size of the House –

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** – which he agrees with – what he said was instead of doing that, why don't we reduce communication staff. He wants to go after public servants before he reduces his

own politics, before he reduces his own political staff. He turned it immediately to public servants.

Mr. Speaker, I have said it and I will say it again, all options are on the table, we need to start in our own house, get our own business in order, and lead by example. I am willing to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

Well, leading by example means leading; it means making those decisions first. Cut the Cabinet ministers and reduce the number of parliamentary secretaries, I say, Mr. Speaker.

On January 6 there is a letter that government – January 6, 2015 letter to CETA says that they are pulling provincial support for any trade agreement currently under negotiation by Canada. However, in today's press release the minister says that the provincial government is pulling support from all trade agreements, not just agreements that are currently being negotiated.

I ask the Premier: Which is it, and how will this action impact and affect NAFTA?

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

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

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

We have been quite clear. When the federal government came to us and they asked us to give up MPRs –

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** – minimum processing requirements in our fishery so that the Government of Canada can secure its CETA deal, we said we supported a CETA deal on the



condition that we have our cost-shared fisheries innovation fund, cost shared 70-30; \$280 million from the federal government and \$120 million from our government. We continue to support that.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to get in a room and negotiate with a government that does not agree to its own agreements. It does not abide by its own agreements. This is about principle. This is about treating Newfoundlanders and Labradorians fairly by the federal government, by the Government of Canada.

How can you negotiate and work with a government that is not going to work with the people who they are partnering with, Mr. Speaker? I just came from an Atlantic Premiers meeting where other Atlantic Premiers agree with Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

Government's letter on pulling support for trade agreements currently under negotiation is dated January 6, 2015. This was a full week before the two ministers went to Ottawa, and thirteen days before notifying the people of the Province that the support for international trade agreements had been pulled.

I ask the Premier: Why did you keep this important information secret from the people for almost two weeks?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, since the House adjourned in December, I can tell you throughout the Christmas season the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs continues to work on the CETA file on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Both ministers, the Ministers of Business and Intergovernmental Affairs, went to Ottawa. They visited with numerous industry

organizations and numerous individuals who wanted to have meetings, who wanted to have discussions.

They wanted to know where are we in this agreement, how did we get to where we are, and they wanted to understand the agreement. They have done that very well, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, these two ministers have represented our best interests well, and we will continue to fight the Government of Canada to get what is right for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

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

My question for the Premier is a very simple one, actually, and I am assuming the Premier would know the answer to this.

My question is: The letter that was sent on January 6, 2015, why did you keep that from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? You have still not answered the impact that this would have on NAFTA.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we are not keeping anything from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a process that is alive, Mr. Speaker. There are numerous pieces of work and actions that are being taken in regard to our relationship with the Government of Canada. I suppose we could just open a door and have someone follow us around and watch every move and every step we are taking, Mr. Speaker, but we are making numerous attempts to ensure the Government of Canada honours its agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are going to continue to make those efforts.

As I just said, I just came from the Atlantic Premiers, Mr. Speaker. I met with them in the

last two days. We had a good discussion this morning. Just now at a press briefing before coming here this afternoon, all three premiers support Newfoundland and Labrador in its efforts to ensure the Government of Canada lives up to its obligations to our people, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice is the lead department on Bill 42 to amend the electoral boundaries. The Minister of Justice is responsible for presenting this report in the House, but she cannot because she is not elected and she is not allowed in this House. I assume the minister took part in Cabinet deliberations and had to present the plan to Cabinet, but she has yet to speak publicly on the rationale.

I ask the Premier: How can government justify placing such a responsibility in the hands of an unelected minister who refuses to face the people of the Province and cannot answer questions from this House?

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have said time and time again that we, as a government, would bring legislation before this House. We will conduct the affairs of the Province. We will continue to deliver legislation no matter what department it comes from, and if it is Justice and Public Safety, we are going to continue to deliver those legislations. Mr. Speaker, we are here doing that in January because it is an important piece of legislation.

If we are truly committed to electoral reform, if we are committed to changing our boundaries and updating our boundaries, Mr. Speaker, we need to come into the Legislature to do that. We are doing that now. We have government here

who are ready to deliver on that. We are ready to debate it. We are here in the House to do it, and we are looking forward to the opportunity to debate the substance of the bill, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, Judy Manning is getting paid to hold a responsibility that she cannot discharge. How can the Premier justify having a paid unelected minister who is incapable of discharging her own duties?

I ask the Premier: Everything is on the table; is Judy Manning's position on the table, too?

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

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

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

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

The minister continues to carry out the work that she has been tasked with doing. She has been part of this process like all ministers have, Mr. Speaker. We have been very engaged in the process that brings us to this Legislature today. We have been engaged as a Cabinet. We have been engaged as a caucus, Mr. Speaker, and we have heard from numerous people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is not a new discussion, Mr. Speaker. I had very significant discussions. I did. The Minister of Health has had numerous discussions on this in the last year about the importance that people place on House of Assembly reform. Reforming pensions for MHAs; I have said I am going to do it, and I am doing it, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** The day-to-day operations of the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I said I am going to do it; I am doing it, Mr. Speaker. We are here today to debate the size of the House of Assembly.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

In 2013 this government announced a ten-year plan for sustainability. Clearly, that has not worked. A \$560 million deficit has ballooned to almost a billion dollars, and now the minister is proposing a five-year plan.

I ask the minister: Is the goal of the strategy now to actually eliminate the deficit and the debt, or is it to alleviate the concerns from bond agencies about his government's ability to pay debt as well as equity payments into Nalcor?

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

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely correct. The government back in 2003, our Administration back in 2003, laid out a ten-year sustainability plan and we mapped out how we were going to achieve that. At that particular time, we also had some very strategic, insightful advice from a number of individuals who were forecasting what the price of oil would have been over the course of that ten-year period, and we all know what happened in July.

The price of oil has changed dramatically. It has dropped dramatically. What we have witnessed in the last – well, since July month. What we have witnessed is such an extreme change in the price of oil that it has had an impact on our provincial budget unlike any other event in our history has had such a significant impact, and we need to adjust the course, readjust the course, and that is what we are doing over the next five years.

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

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, last year government gave \$552 million to Nalcor. The

year before it was \$531 million. That is over \$1 billion in two years.

I ask the minister: How much do you plan to give Nalcor next year? Will you consider decreasing this amount given our financial situation and the fact that you say everything is on the table?

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

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** Let me repeat what the Premier has said on any number of occasions in recent weeks. As we go through a review of the current fiscal position of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are examining every aspect of our operations.

We are examining all of our revenue streams. We are examining all of our expenditures. All the plans, all the strategies we have mapped out for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador unfortunately requires us to revisit. We need to examine whether we have the capacity to do it today.

They are still wonderful things. They are still things that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador should have within this Province. We need to re-examine the time frames in which we are going to be able to deliver that, whether it is the investments in Nalcor, whether it is the investments in other strategic infrastructure that we have in the Province. We need to examine all aspects, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, if I was going to go out and buy a really big thing, I would make sure I had the money in the bank before I made that commitment. This government has made a commitment on behalf of the people of the Province. It did not do its homework to make sure it had the money in the bank.

I ask the government: What are you doing to make sure you get the money ready to pay all those commitments that you have made in the future?

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

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I will give the member opposite the benefit of the doubt because she was not around in 2003 when we took over government. She was not around when her colleagues, the Liberal Party, handed over a debt to this Province that almost had us bankrupt. We were spending twenty-four cents on every dollar we raised to service the debt alone, not just reduce it but just to pay the interest on the debt.

When the member opposite stands and starts to preach to us about what we should or should not do, I would suggest she take a look in the mirror. Look at what her party had done to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Look at what we had to do in 2003. Our commitment, Mr. Speaker, is we will not leave this Province in that kind of derelict position as they handed it to us in 2003.

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

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

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

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

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is currently running radio ads promoting social housing as an option for people who need it.

I ask the minister responsible: Why are you advertising Newfoundland and Labrador Housing when people are now on a wait-list? Don't you think people know they need housing?

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite obvious; the member opposite has missed the entire point, or he chose to miss the point.

We know, Mr. Speaker, and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, in hearing from its constituents, recognize there was a stigma often attached with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. This is about eliminating the stigma that is attached to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

I support the campaign, Mr. Speaker. I think it is a wonderful initiative by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has imposed a freeze on discretionary spending.

I ask the minister responsible again: How much has government spent on these radio ads, including air time and production? How do you justify spending money to promote a program that already cannot meet its demand? In a time of cutbacks, isn't this irresponsible?

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

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, this is done under contract. I certainly make no apologies to it. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing heard from their constituents. This is one of the things they wanted to do.

Look at what they did. They took a senior, Mr. Speaker, someone who has a disability, they work with these people. They are promoting a positive image around Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the work that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is doing in their entirety.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** This money would have been better spent on leaky roofs or leaky windows, Mr. Speaker.

Not only is government spending money to promote a wait-listed housing program, it is spending money to advertise the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation.

I ask the minister responsible for that: Including air time and production, what have these radio ads cost? Do you really think the Province needs to advertise the liquor corporation? People in this Province know where to buy liquor.

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

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

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

The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation is a Crown corporation that operates independent; they have their own board. They have their board that makes their own independent decisions.

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

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** They are accountable to the government, as a Crown corporation, but I will undertake to find out how much those ads would cost.

I just want to remind the member opposite, the corporation is an independent body that operates and returns their profits to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on an annual basis.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, the Senior Crown Attorney in Happy Valley-Goose Bay

has resigned. This leaves the office, with two Crown prosecutors, three positions short of a full complement. This office has the second highest caseload in the Province, the highest outside of St. John's.

I ask the Minister of Justice: What steps are you taking to deal with the continued substandard service being offered in Labrador?

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

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

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

It is a very serious issue, and I certainly thank the member opposite for raising it. It has been a concern for government for some time: our ability to attract and retain Crown prosecutors in Labrador.

First of all, I want to assure the member that there will be no break in service provided there. Staff and the Director of Public Prosecutions have made arrangements so that there will be travelling Crown prosecutors to ensure that the justice system proceeds and there will be no break in service.

I can also say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that there are a couple of things happening he might want to be aware of. One is that human resources are engaged with a number of other possible prospects right now, and I am certainly prepared to keep you updated on that as we move forward.

The second piece of information, Mr. Speaker, is that we, through our department, have engaged with a discussion around alternate means of attracting and retaining people in Labrador.

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

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

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

The Department of Justice, as the minister alluded to, is flying in two Crown Attorneys from St. John's to handle court circuits in Nain

and Natuashish; yet, I have recently received a resume from a qualified Nunatsiavut beneficiary who applied for a position with the Crown Attorney's Office and was turned down.

So I ask the minister: What steps are you taking to ensure equal opportunities for qualified Aboriginal professionals, as per your government's commitment?

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

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

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

The member would certainly appreciate, I am sure, that I am not in a position to be able to talk about individual hirings and human resource processes respecting individuals here in the House of Assembly. I can certainly commit to have a chat with the member outside of Question Period if he would like, but what I will say is that I am not aware that any qualified individual from Labrador has applied and been turned down. I am suggesting the member is misleading me, but if you want to share it with me outside, I will certainly have a look at it.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that if there is one thing we are committed to, it is to work with the member to get the full complement in Labrador. It has been an ongoing issue; I have been directly dealing with it myself now for pushing three-plus years. We need to find a way forward. If we can find a way to deal with the compensation and other benefits that attract people into Labrador that is where we want to be.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

**MR. FLYNN:** Mr. Speaker, the Corner Brook Hospital Action Committee met with the Minister of Health in November, at which time he committed to having the hospital design to them within two or three weeks. That is his words, not mine. This commitment is now again broken.

So I ask the minister: When will you provide the functional design to the action committee and the residents of Western Newfoundland?

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

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, the final design and functional plan will be available in the very near future. I am committed to providing regular updates to the people of the West Coast and also the hospital action committee. I had a very productive meeting with them before Christmas, and I look forward to continued discussions as well.

We continue to make progress on the project. We are very committed to the project, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. FLYNN:** Mr. Speaker, the minister stood in this House on December 15, when asked the question on the number of ultrasound units that would be in the new hospital, and he committed to getting that information and providing it to the House. He failed again to table the information, as committed, the next sitting day. Residents are concerned about their health, particularly the women.

I ask the minister: Will you honour your commitment and table this information immediately? We have sent letters and we have asked the questions here in the House. It is time.

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

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

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

There is a lot of passion on the other side of the House today it seems. I am happy to provide the information that the member has asked for.

There will, in fact, be more ultrasound units in the new hospital based on the draft functional plan, not less.

We are increasing the ultrasound units by two, Mr. Speaker. That is the current proposal. This is the first opportunity I have had to provide the information to the House, and I am happy to answer the member's question.

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the thirtieth anniversary of the sinking of the *Manolis L* with 500 tons of fuel and oil. For years, oil leaks and seeps have been having environmental and wildlife impacts.

I ask the Minister of Environment: Have you pushed for a commitment from the federal government to remove the remaining oil, or are you willing to accept inadequate cofferdam as a permanent solution?

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

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

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, myself and my colleague, the MHA for The Isles of Notre Dame, attended a meeting with the *Manolis L* concerned citizens' committee. We also attended a rally where people talked about exactly what was going on there. Everybody who was there all agreed that a permanent solution is what needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aligned; we are all on the same side. There were political stripes of every party sitting in the room together. We all agreed that this is exactly what needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, I called the federal minister just before Christmas. I had a conversation with Minister Gail Shea. I put it to her exactly what was going on. We talked about the temporary solution with the cofferdam. It is not a solution that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want; it is not what they need. We need this fixed. We need it fixed immediately, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

The Premier has told the people of this Province that he is going to reduce the number of electoral districts to thirty-eight from the current forty-eight. Coming up with a new number of districts is a complex process.

I ask the Premier: Who did they consult with in order to come up with this very specific number, or did they just pluck it out of mid-air?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is on record that we need to reduce the size of the House of Assembly. The process we have initiated is to do exactly that, Mr. Speaker. It is to do that.

Under current legislation, that process is required to take place in 2016. It would not become effective until 2019. That is another full, four-year term, which can equate, with a ten seat reduction, to a difference of \$10 million. It is in the range of \$10 million, Mr. Speaker, difference to the taxpayers, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We have nine months available to us between now and when the election is scheduled. The last date the election should be in October; nine months, Mr. Speaker.

The 1996 process took nine months. There is no reason – if we work together and we co-operate and get on with it, we can get this done, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This person is on record for saying she is open for a discussion with regard to the number of seats in this House.

I am asking the Premier, why is he planning to bypass the democratic process currently outlined in our Electoral Boundaries Act?

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, to the contrary; the member opposite must misunderstand, because we are following what the legislation – what we are doing in the proposed legislation that is going to come to the House this week is to move that process up. It is to move that process up to do it now.

The current legislation lays out the number of seats. The new legislation we are proposing is to lay out the number of seats and go to an independent commission with a chair appointed by the Chief Justice of Newfoundland and Labrador and four members appointed by the Speaker of this House. Mr. Speaker, an independent commission to determine the boundaries. Not for us as politicians to do it, but for an independent commission to do it.

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

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

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

I still have not received an answer to my first question.

The Premier stated publicly that we need to reduce the number of electoral districts in the Province as a cost-saving measure, saving \$2.4 million a year – let's name it as a year; that is how much – less than 1 per cent of the current deficit.

I ask the Premier: With such a small annual saving, is his plan really a cost-saving measure? Is that what it is? I do not think so.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the Leader of the Third Party yet understands the enormity and the seriousness of the fiscal challenges we face as a Province. It is important upon us –

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** It is important upon us to take every step and every action that is available to us to be responsible and to deal with the fiscal challenges that we face, Mr. Speaker. We have no control over the world oil prices. It is a direct result of the world oil prices. The impact is not only impacting us, it is impacting other provinces in Canada. It is having serious impacts in other provinces, including Alberta, as an example, Mr. Speaker, who are dealing with a serious crisis in their province as well.

We have to do the responsible thing. We have to govern. We have to make hard and difficult decisions, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you as Premier, I am willing to make those hard decisions.

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

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

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

The current Electoral Boundaries Act stipulates that Labrador have four districts, but the Premier has said he will let the electoral boundaries commission decide if Labrador will keep four districts.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to protecting these four districts so Labradorians can be fairly represented and their voices heard?

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



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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, the legislation lays out an independent commission to determine the boundaries. It is supposed to happen every ten years. It happened in 2006; it is supposed to occur again in 2016.

The circumstances we face today, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party, and I, as Premier, are all in agreement that the size of the House of Assembly needs to be reduced. Mr. Speaker, we can do it today. We do not have to wait until 2019. That is \$10 million that we are going to find, and I can tell you, there are a lot more \$10 million blocks that we need to find, Mr. Speaker, between now and when we bring the Budget down.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** We are facing a difficult time. Every \$10 million counts. It is not a small amount of money. It is a large amount of money, and the people of the Province expect us to do what is right, Mr. Speaker, starting in our own house.

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

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

The time for Question Period has expired.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

#### **Notices of Motion**

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill –

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

The hon. the Government House Leader, with notices of motion.

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act, Bill 42.

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

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I give notice that the resolution that the Member for St. John's Centre gave notice of on December 15 will be debated on Wednesday, January 21.

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

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

#### **Petitions**

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

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

I have a petition 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 the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to the electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the population and demographics of each district and properly calculate the necessary adjustments for a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to ensure that, with or without the completion of the work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing the commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirement to hold a provincial general election in 2015.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people I spoke with who signed this petition feel very strongly that there is a little bit of politics involved here, and that politics is trying to push the election into 2016. It is an act, a desperate act by a desperate group of people.

Another person who signed the petition told me, Mr. Speaker, a desperate act by a desperate group of people who know that if the election were called today they would lose that election. They know that if the election were called in June or July they would lose that election.

The election has to be called, Mr. Speaker, before September. They know they are desperate to hang on to power. That is what I have been told by the people who have signed.

They are desperate to hang on to power to the point that they are trying to push this out to 2016. That is the fear of the people who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, and they want to ensure that with or without the completion of the work by the electoral boundaries commission this government does not push the election into 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS mental health programs and services are crucial to the health of individuals, families and communities; and

WHEREAS despite mental health program and services being delivered by government, community-based organizations and informally by families and friends, there are still large gaps in services and programs in the Province; and

WHEREAS despite these efforts, stigma remains a significant barrier for people needing to access mental health services and participate in society; and

WHEREAS new directions and priorities are needed for mental health programs and service delivery, especially for unique groups such as youth, Aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees; and

WHEREAS deep fiscal cuts in the last Budget have placed a great strain on organizations delivering mental health services in the Province;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately strike an all-party committee on mental health which, through extensive public

consultation, will review the current state of provincial mental health services, receive expert testimony on best practices in mental health care delivery, and report their findings with the intent to provide guidance and oversight in redesigning mental health programs and services to better serve the needs of all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition, which has been signed by thousands of people across the Province because people know the desperate situation of mental health services across the Province, is asking for immediate action. It has been a few months now since this was first introduced. The people across the Province know because they live with the reality of the shortage of services of people who are suffering with mental health issues. It is a critical issue and it requires a critical solution.

Mr. Speaker, I had the fortune to attend the Premier's Health Summit. Everybody at my table were people who were very experienced in the health care profession, who worked in the health care profession for years. We all came with the knowledge of the number of reports and consultations that have been done and that have simply not been tabled.

We know with the report on the landlord tenancy act, that report was supposed to be tabled to this House. It was done over two years ago. We have not seen hide nor hair of it. The same thing with the housing and homelessness report.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely critical that we have an all-party committee so that we deal with this in a thorough and in a comprehensive manner. The whole House of Assembly must be committed to dealing with this critical problem that affects the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and their families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** 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 the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the population and demographics of each district and properly calculate the necessary adjustments for the change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to ensure that, with or without completion of the work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing the commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirement to hold a provincial general election in 2015.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, over the last three days I have had many conversations with members of my caucus, but more importantly, I have had discussions with people in my district. Many

people believe that this government, although it professes to be altruistic in its motives, is focused singularly and solely on extending their shelf life. That is a real concern to democracy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

If the commission needs extra time to be able to do its work, it should be allowed to do that and should not interfere with an election as planned. It is not the problem for the electorate that the current government could not get a leadership campaign off the ground. That is what delayed, in essence, an election date.

People of the Province expect an election to happen this year. I look forward to the debate we are going to have in the next few days on this piece of legislation that government is going to introduce.

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 rise today to present a petition. I will not read the petition because we already heard it. It is the same one that was heard before.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I will reread it for the record for the House of Assembly.

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:

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As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I tell you what I find so – if it was not so serious, it would almost be part of Revue 2015. Here we have an unelected minister who is coming into the Cabinet, asking to make changes early to the electoral boundaries of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, who is not even elected, and we cannot even ask questions.

Counting on people who are elected, here is what should happen. She is going to take it – she is unelected, is not going to run, telling the Premier of this Province I am not running until the next general election and walking in and telling all of us, everybody, not just on this side, not just the Third Party but everybody, telling everybody who put their name on the ballot: Here is what I am recommending, here is what I

am going to bring to Cabinet, here is what I am going to do, but I am not going to speak about it. I can assure you that it is fundamentally wrong.

I will tell you what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker. I go back to Bill 29. You think back, you go back to that, Mr. Speaker. I feel it is fundamentally wrong that the person who is doing it cannot be answering questions in the House of Assembly. Bill 29 –

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

The member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

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

The petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

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As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have sat over here for about a year and a half, and there have been a lot of things happen that I have not been pleased with. I have lived in Labrador my whole life, and there have been decades of things that I have not been pleased with.

I can tell you now, Mr. Speaker, the people of Labrador have been completely outraged that a Premier without a mandate, a Premier who was elected by less than 400 people in the Province, can turn around and look at four seats that were protected in Labrador. Seventy per cent of the landmass of Newfoundland and Labrador, and he expects it to be represented by less than 10 per cent of the people in the House.

There was a reason that provision was made for these four seats. They looked at accessibility; they looked at transportation, Mr. Speaker. This is a blatant attack on democracy. Let the commission do its work. Let's go to the polls. If we are serious about saving taxpayers' dollars – seven by-elections, Mr. Speaker, costing taxpayers about \$100,000 each. Let's go to the polls, Mr. Speaker.

I want to add that the petition I am presenting is on behalf of the people of Lake Melville. I want the minister for Labrador to know that the petition I am presenting is from the people of Lake Melville.

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Labrador has lost enough. We need to stand up, and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister for Labrador, sometimes that means standing alone because it means standing for the right thing. I believe we have to be united here, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot wait to get into the debate when we look at what happened in the other reforms and to see the gall and the audacity of this Premier and his government.

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

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

**MR. FLYNN:** 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 the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes in the electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agrees with the reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the population and demographics of each district and properly calculate the necessary adjustments for a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to ensure that, with or without the completion of the work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing the commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and

mandated requirement to hold a provincial general election in 2015.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I received that petition from members in the Lake Melville area because they knew I was born and raised in Labrador part of my life. I decided to move to the West Coast, but they really had no choice because the minister representing Lake Melville could not speak up at the Cabinet table and receive a four seat mandate to move forward and it is really putting Labrador at a disadvantage. Mr. Speaker, I think it is shameful.

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** 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 the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the population and demographics of each district and properly calculate the necessary adjustments for a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to ensure that, with or without the completion of the work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing the commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirement to hold a provincial general election in 2015.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am presenting this petition today on behalf of residents of St. John's and residents of Mount Pearl who are speaking out. They are saying they do not support pushing out the general election beyond what this current government has in its mandate. Any further than that, they do not have a mandate to go beyond the 2015 general election. They are saying there is opportunity to look at seat reduction, but it has to be done right.

One of my MHA responsibilities is looking at the Office of Public Engagement. When we look at their Web site and we look at the dated data that came out, when you make decisions and you have imperfect information and you try and fast track things, well, you usually result in failure, as the Leader of the Official Opposition has said. The Census information does not come out until 2016.

These were reasons why the electoral boundaries commission would have been kick-started in 2016 to allow for sufficient time, sufficient consultation, and also look at all the other things. This government is looking at completely changing the law as it exists, weakening the voice of Labrador and not looking at the vast geography that exists there. These petitions as we have presented today come from across the Province, and looking at it from a Mount Pearl and St. John's perspective, they would not want to see the election changed.

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

I remind the member his time has expired.

Orders of the Day.

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 1, Address in Reply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Address in Reply.

The hon. the Premier.

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

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

For those folks who are watching at home and wondering – we convened the House to bring a bill forward on the Electoral Boundaries Act – I think it would be prudent for me just to take a couple of minutes to explain to people at home why I am on my feet today and why we are talking to Address in Reply.

**MR. FLYNN:** (Inaudible).

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

I would ask the Member for Humber East to withdraw his comment.

**MR. FLYNN:** I withdraw.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier, to continue.

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

Mr. Speaker, before Christmas in Address in Reply I used some of my time – as Premier, I get sixty minutes to speak in Address in Reply. I have thirty-eight minutes left of my sixty-minute allotment.

In order for a bill to be debated in the House, the Electoral Boundaries Act, which we have convened the House of Assembly to debate, there are a number of steps that take place. The first step in the first day is that notice has to be

given to table a bill, which the Government House Leader has done here today. The next step, which generally happens on the next sitting day, is for first reading of the bill, and then subsequent to that there will be second reading of the bill. It is not until second reading of the bill that debate actually occurs, and debate occurs during second reading and through Committee processes and third reading after that. So until we get to that stage of our parliamentary process, then debate on the bill will not actually occur.

This afternoon I would like to use, as I said, my remaining thirty-eight minutes – now just over thirty-six minutes remaining in Address in Reply. Under Address in Reply, we are very broad on the topics that we can discuss and the matters that we can discuss and debate here in the House of Assembly.

There are a couple that I want to talk about this afternoon. I will get to the Electoral Boundaries Act, but I think the most important topics in the Province that I have heard from people repeatedly is where we are as a Province in regard to the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement and our discussions with the federal government, a very important matter for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, important for us as a Province. The CETA agreement is a perpetuity agreement; it will be forever, so it forever will obviously have long-lasting effects and impacts on Newfoundland and Labrador.

What happened, Mr. Speaker, by way of background, so all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians understand the entire process that is taking place – and also members of the House as well – is that through the CETA negotiation process the federal government is negotiating with the European Union on a trade agreement. Newfoundland and Labrador has been part of those negotiations. Canada is the signatory and the lead entity in leading those discussions with the European Union and its member states, but we have been part of that process. Part of that process, the federal government came to Newfoundland and Labrador in the spring of 2013 and signified, indicated, that they required MPRs in order for CETA to be accomplished.

I will explain what that means. Mr. Speaker, by the way, I am referring to a document here

which outlines everything I am going to say today. It is a document that has been produced by us as a government. It is our position on the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement. If the members opposite would like, I can table a copy of it here now if you want to have a look at it, if you do not already have a copy. Mr. Speaker, actually I will table that and maybe our Pages can share that with Members of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in early 2013 the federal government came to Newfoundland and Labrador and said, look, in order to achieve the agreement with the European Union they required MPRs, which are minimum processing requirements in our fishery. Mr. Speaker, our fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, you cannot overstate the importance of it to our Province, particularly to rural parts of our Province and to rural and remote communities throughout the Province, throughout the Island portion and also throughout Labrador.

We, as a Province, even though we are so based on the fishery and the fishery is so important to us, we have two authorities. We have two authorities that give us authority over the fishery: one is licensing of processing facilities and the other one is MPRs, or minimum processing requirements. The MPRs require that fish go through a minimum processing before it leaves the Province, before it is being exported.

It is the hammer that ensures processing facilities, fish plants, throughout Newfoundland and Labrador continue to operate. It is the jurisdictional authority that ensures people continue to have employment in the fish plants throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The federal government, the Government of Canada, came to us and said in order for us to secure CETA Newfoundland and Labrador would have to relinquish that long-standing policy, that long-standing insurance for our agreement with the European Union. It only has implication for the European Union. Significant trading partners like the US, China, and other countries are not impacted by this; it is only for the European Union.

As we looked at it as a government, the first thought that anybody would reach would be:



That could have an impact – are they going to now ship unprocessed seafood products out of Newfoundland and Labrador to the European Union unprocessed and have a negative impact on our fish processors? That is the first reaction I think that anybody would reach during this type of a discussion.

Mr. Speaker, we looked at it too. We consulted with industry, and we talked to industry members and stakeholders. We looked at the considerations. We know that fish processing in the European Union is costly. Water costs are high, electricity costs are high, and labour costs are competitive. After all of the consideration given to it, it is not believed today that our MPRs would put our fish plants at risk in this Province. We do not believe that. The fishing industry does not believe that. The processors do not believe it. We do not believe it today.

Mr. Speaker, it is a perpetuity agreement; it is forever. So it was important for us to make sure that – because we cannot predict the future. We do not know what is going to happen in five years down the road, or six or seven years down the road. We do not know what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker. We could see a case where one of the member states, one of the countries in the EU decide they are going to invest millions and billions of dollars now into fish processing so that fish processors could become competitive. We do not know; they could do that. They could try to do something like that. We do not know what is going to happen.

So we wanted to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fishery. What happened during the discussion was we reached an agreement. Mr. Speaker, that agreement was reached during late May and early June 2013. That is when we negotiated that agreement with the federal government to exchange MPRs for a cost-shared fund of \$400 million. It is cost shared on a 70-30 basis. The federal government pays 70 per cent of it, and we, as a Province, pay 30 per cent of it.

Mr. Speaker, through a number of exchanges between the federal government and the Province, May 27 to June 2, there were a number of discussions that took place. I am just going to highlight a couple of them, Mr.

Speaker. Again, they are highlighted in this document that is publicly available.

On June 1, a letter from the federal government noted specifically – and I quote, Mr. Speaker – “with respect to the proposed transition program of up to \$400 million, we note your willingness to agree to a 70/30, federal/provincial cost-sharing formula. In the context of this commitment on cost-sharing, we are prepared to instruct our officials that the transition program address industry development and renewal as well as worker displacement.”

Now, this is an important part, Mr. Speaker, because today the federal government’s position is this is about worker displacement. This is a fund for losses, is their position today, because they have introduced demonstrated loss, and I will get to that. Clearly, back on June 1, 2013, they indicate industry development and renewal.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** That is what it is about, Mr. Speaker.

On June 2, the very next day, another letter from the federal government acknowledged the Province’s acceptance of the, “proposed terms regarding MPRs and the transition program.” They have acknowledged that. They have acknowledged the proposed terms regarding MPRs.

On October 18, Mr. Speaker, an agreement in principle was reached between the federal government and our Province. “On the same day the Province wrote the Federal Government noting specifically that” – and I will quote again – “with respect to the commitment to the \$400 million 70/30 Federal/Provincial cost-shared program, which was confirmed in previous correspondence and in our telephone conversation on October 15, 2013,” – so it was relating to a telephone conversation that took place shortly before it – “we welcome a joint announcement between our Governments as soon as possible.”

Shortly after that, Mr. Speaker, on October 23, a phone conversation took place between the

federal minister and the provincial minister responsible for trade of the day; I think it was the Minister of Finance, Minister Johnson at the time. They had a telephone conversation. During the telephone conversation they wanted to clear up this language regarding “up to”. There has been some discussion about what does that “up to” mean – up to \$400 million, up to \$280 million?

During that conversation – “up to” means the federal government and the Province have agreed to a 70-30 cost-shared ratio, 70 per cent by the federal government and 30 per cent by the Province, a 70-30 cost-shared ratio. “Up to” means they will put in \$280 million as long as we put in our \$120 million. If the Province decided we only want to put in \$60 million, well then on a cost-shared 70-30 basis, the federal government would only put in \$140 million. They would put in up to the \$280 million, Mr. Speaker, and only up to the \$280 million.

Mr. Speaker, that is what the up to referred to. If we wanted to put in \$500 million, they are still only going to put in \$280 million because it is up to \$280 million. If it is lower than that, it would be cost. If we put in less, the ratio is 70-30. If we put in more, they are only still going to put in \$280 million.

Mr. Speaker, that discussion happened. On October 23 that discussion occurred. Then there was an e-mail, there was an exchange as well. It happened shortly after that in which there were the details of the fund that they were following up on. In the outcome of the conversation it was confirmed the following day, on October 24, where the Province specifically outlined, and I will quote again, that we “will provide \$120 million towards the industry transition fund. This represents our 30 per cent share” – as I have just indicated – “of the program, to which you have confirmed that the Federal Government will contribute \$280 million. We will announce this exciting new \$400 million funding partnership on Tuesday, October 29, 2013.” That was pertaining to the conversation that had taken place between Minister Fast and Minister Johnson.

Now, Mr. Speaker, provincial officials had contact with the federal minister’s office after that. Mr. Bill Hawkins, who is involved in the

discussions as well, currently works in the Prime Minister’s Office. That occurred between October 23 and October 29. There was continuation of discussions, Mr. Speaker.

During that process, “On October 23, 2013, federal officials clearly indicated that the federal government was fully aware of the Province ‘is intending to soon announce/make a public reference to our governments’ intent to develop a cost-shared (70/30 fed/prov) transitional program of up to a combined total to \$400M that would address fish and seafood industry development” – here it is again, fish and seafood industry development – “and renewal as well as workers whose jobs who are displaced in future as result of MPRs no longer being applied to products destined for the EU.”

So, Mr. Speaker, it is clear again what the fund was supposed to be for. These are e-mails from officials in the federal government, ministers in the federal government.

On October 22, the provincial official e-mailed Mr. Hawkins to advise that we are going to move forward with this event – that we talked about – to announce the fund that we had agreed to between both levels of government. Mr. Hawkins, who now works in the Prime Minister’s Office, responded, “We (federal govt, but likely not through Minister Fast’s office here in Trade) look fwd to addressing inquiries that come in re this program, both tomorrow and in the days ahead as the policy details get fleshed out by our respective officials.”

Mr. Speaker, he acknowledges we are going to go ahead and make the announcement. He says we are going to get inquiries about this. We look forward to it. It is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, we were on the same page.

Now, Mr. Speaker, from that point onwards, the federal government moved the fund from Minister Fast to Minister Moore, who is the minister who represents Newfoundland and Labrador in the federal Cabinet. He is also the Minister of ACOA. It is kind of ironic he represents our best interests in the federal Cabinet, but in January – Minister Moore represents ACOA.

ACOA, by the way, is about opportunities for development. It is about creating jobs. It is about stimulating the economy, providing opportunities throughout the Atlantic Region. It is about innovation. It is about driving new industry. That is what it is about, Mr. Speaker. It is about all of the things that we said the fund was supposed to be for. It is about providing opportunities for things like research and development and so on. Minister Moore was assigned this duty from the Prime Minister to take this over.

In January, 2014, a year ago, Minister Moore – as I said, minister for ACOA – and his officials met with Newfoundland representatives. Also, by the way, in early 2014 Minister Moore also went to the St. John's Board of Trade. He met with officials here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and he never mentioned for some reason – it just slipped his mind I suppose. There was no mention of demonstrated loss. There was no mention at all of demonstrated loss at this time period.

Mr. Speaker, it did not slip his mind because it did not exist. The requirement for demonstrated loss did not exist in the agreement that we had reached. That is why there was no mention of it. Through 2014, there was no mention of it.

In May, the Minister of Fisheries of the day, currently the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, wrote the federal minister about the fund and said to him: it is time to move this forward; where are you on it? He wanted to make some advancement in it and move it ahead. Now we are in August, last summer, 2014, when Canada EU chief negotiators signed off on the final negotiating text, and then signed off in September.

They continued to do the work with CETA. They continued to do the work with the EU, based on a premise. We had an agreement. They continued the process, their agreement with the European Union, and on September 26 there was a negotiation. Then, guess what happened? All of a sudden things started to change.

Now they are in a place with the European Union and they are in a place with CETA that they have signed off on the agreement, the

negotiations and the text and so on. It is not officially completed yet. Then on October 24, Minister Moore finally responds after being asked for a response. We sought out a response, and finally in October he suggested that his officials meet with provincial officials to begin discussions on a fund.

During the subsequent meeting – it happened on October 28, seventeen months after we had reached an agreement. Seventeen months after we reached an agreement, Minister Fast talks about this new measure, this new condition. The new condition was demonstrated damages, Mr. Speaker, which was never on in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, it really makes no sense to us to include demonstrated damages, because in the work we have done since then, and even in the meeting I had with the Prime Minister on December 12, he told me the fund is there. The money is in the bank. It is in the budget. It is there, Mr. Speaker. The fund is there for demonstrated loss.

What is really interesting, though, is that we are probably a year to two years before CETA is finalized. What the CETA agreement says is after CETA becomes applicable there will be a three-year period before MPRs are relinquished by Newfoundland and Labrador. That could be five years from now, Mr. Speaker.

If this was about demonstrated loss, why would it be in the budget today? Why would it exist in the budget today if this is about demonstrated loss five years from now? It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. It makes no sense because that was not the deal. It was not the deal, Mr. Speaker. It was not about demonstrated loss. It was about workforce adjustment, if that was to happen. It was about that.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible).

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I hear the Member for St. Barbe over there, the fisheries expert from the Opposition over there, and maybe he has already said enough today. I will leave that alone; he will figure that out himself in due time, I am sure.

Mr. Speaker, that is five years out. There is no way you could have a demonstrated loss five

years from now. The other thing that I would point out – and the Minister of Business has addressed this recently. He talked about it publicly and he makes a very good point. If this was a compensation fund, why would we contribute to a compensation fund to compensate us? It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible).

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Maybe the Member for St. Barbe should listen to this; he claims to be interested in the fishery. Maybe he should listen instead of his going on over there. He has done that already today and maybe crossed the line I understand, but he should probably be careful over there because this is important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we would not compensate ourselves for a loss; it makes no sense. Because it was not about that.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** It was about fisheries renewal. It was about innovation. Mr. Speaker, it was about conducting science. Because we do science, Mr. Speaker. That is what we do; we do science. The federal government is not doing it. Even though they hold the authority over harvesting in Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, they are not doing the science. We are doing the science.

So, Mr. Speaker, our position is clear. As I have said many, many times, I will do what I have to do to represent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, CETA is important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is important to Newfoundland and Labrador businesses; we know that. It is of utmost importance to the business community in our Province; we know that, and I respect that, and it is important to us too.

There is a fundamental problem that I have when someone comes to you and says we need

something; let's do a deal. We reach a deal and armed with that deal, you go off and you settle off your own deals. Now you have all that done, and then you come back and you say no, that is not what we meant. We are going to change it now.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you, I have a problem with that. I have a problem with that personally. I have a problem with that on principle that you if you have reached an agreement, if you have done it in good faith, you have met, you have had discussions, you have reached agreements –

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible) put it in writing?

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I say to the Member for St. Barbe, it is all contained in here. If you cannot contain shouting across the floor over there while we are talking about this very important matter and he is asking questions about it – it is all in here, I say to the member. Maybe you should read Twitter, I say to the member opposite. Maybe you should have a look at Twitter and see what they are saying.

Mr. Speaker, what it is, is a principle. It is a principle that we reach an agreement and based on the principle of that, based on fairness, based on the fact we did it in good faith, we need to stick to that agreement. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians expect us to stick to the agreement. We supported CETA. We said we support CETA, based on the execution of the agreement that we have reached. Our support for CETA is clear, based on that agreement that we reached. That was the deal. We got an agreement, we got a fund, and our support for CETA will be there. No fund, Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you we have a problem.

We have to deal with that. The ministers have done a good job; I talked about it earlier. We will continue to talk to industry representatives, representing industry and business throughout Canada. We will continue to talk to European countries and representatives from the European Union, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to talk to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because they want to know more about it. They want to know that we are representing their best interests and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why we are in the House this week is a bill that was brought to the House today on the Electoral Boundaries Act. This is not new for me and it is not new for us as a party or as a government, because last year I began to have discussions about the House of Assembly and the House of Assembly reform. I have talked many times about three aspects of reforming the House of Assembly. One I talked about was MHA pensions. Because we as a government went to public servants to make amendments to their pension plan and to make changes to their pension plan.

Even though our pension plan was changed in recent years – when I came to the House of Assembly in March 2010, I was the first MHA elected under the new pension plan in 2010. That was the pension plan that was designed by Chief Justice Green after he did a full and comprehensive review of the operations of the House of Assembly. This was the new pension plan that came forward. When I came in, I was the first one in under the new pension plan.

It is prudent, I think, for us as a government to ask the Speaker – which I have done, and the Speaker is quite aware. I have asked the Speaker to have a look at the pension plan again – former Premier Marshall did the same thing – with a view of what we have done with public servants. I think that is prudent and the right thing for us to do.

The second thing I have asked the Speaker to do is to review the day-to-day operations of the House of Assembly, because I do not believe that we get best value from all members. I know members opposite are going to say: How come you are doing it now? Why didn't you do it before? Well, I was not Premier before and I am Premier now. I believe that we have –

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** If you are not elected by the people, you are not.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Well, I certainly was, I say to the Member for St. Barbe. I was elected the same way you were. I say to the Member for St. Barbe, I was elected the same way you were. I went knocking on doors and I campaigned, and I asked the people to elect me the same as you and

you and you and all of you, Mr. Speaker. Every one of us were elected (inaudible) this House of Assembly.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** So, Mr. Speaker, I believe we should reform the day-to-day operations of the House of Assembly, because I do not think we get best value out of the House of Assembly. We have members elected on both sides of the House who are not Cabinet ministers, Opposition members, and what is commonly known, backbenchers here on the Government side of the House, and I believe we need a process that has greater engagement for all Members of the House of Assembly. I believe that will create better outcomes for us as parliamentarians when we have greater engagement by all of us in the House and we have better opportunity to discuss what is happening in the House. As you know –

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, I have also asked you to convene the Standing Orders Committee and to look at the day-to-day operations to find a more effective way, a more modernized way for us to do the business right here in the House of Assembly.

The third thing that I want to do as Premier when we talk about House of Assembly reform, is the size of the House, and that is what brings us here today.

We know already, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party, and myself, we are in agreement that we can reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly. Now, under current legislation, under the current Electoral Boundaries Act, it stipulates forty-eight seats. So, in order to change that, we need to change legislation. As I said when I got up this afternoon, in my comments, I talked about how the first day there has to be a notice of motion, the second day is the first reading of the bill, and then you go to second reading and you go to Committee and third reading and so on. It is not until you get to second reading that you actually have a debate. So that is why it is not specifically being debated today.

What we have is a bill coming forward that essentially moves the time ahead. Instead of waiting for 2016, which is the scheduled time under current legislation – we know all three party leaders agree that when that process was to take place we are going to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it would not have come into effect until 2019. So, Mr. Speaker, we are going through a vigorous process to find all avenues available to us to deal with the fiscal challenges that we face as a result of the world oil prices.

We have no control over the world oil prices, Mr. Speaker. Now, some people would say that we should have created a rainy day fund. When the oil started back in the early 2000s, we should have put money away. With all respect to everybody here in the House, we had significant infrastructure challenges facing our Province. We had significant service delivery challenges in our Province. We needed to deal with many, many aspects of what we had to deal with in government.

I say to the people of the Province, if you go home tonight and you leave your office, you leave your place of work, and you are coming home and for whatever reason, you got a bonus at work and you have some money in your pocket, you say I am going to take that now and I am going to open a savings account. I am going to put that away for a rainy day. That is a good thing to do, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it. People should save and plan appropriately, no doubt about it.

If I went home tonight, I pull in my driveway and I have some money in my pocket and I am thinking I am going to go down now and open a savings account and put it away for a rainy day, it is probably a good choice of words, rainy day. Maybe it is a rainy day. I walk in my house and I have water coming down from my ceiling; I have a leaky roof. What am I going to do? Put a bucket out and go on down to the bank and put my money away, or am I going to fix my roof? You have to fix your roof before you can start saving. You have to get your own house in order, your own home; your own structure has to be in order before you can put that money away.

Mr. Speaker, we had a lot of leaky roofs to fix in this Province, and we still have leaky roofs to

fix. We had schools that were in dilapidated condition. I say to members opposite with all sincerity, with all due respect to everyone in the House, with the challenges that were faced back then, we found ourselves in a circumstance where we were. We had business to manage and we had decisions to make. We could not do everything, but we certainly had roads to fix, we certainly had schools to fix, and we certainly had hospitals to fix. We had services to build on. We needed more doctors, we needed more nurses, and we needed more teachers.

We needed lots of stuff in the Province, Mr. Speaker, that we never had. We needed to do work with our post-secondary education. There was a big demand. We needed to continue to freeze tuition because there were so many benefits that came from freezing tuition. There was a ton of benefits, and I do not have time to get into them today. By continuation with the freeze, we did that. We made investments in business. We made investments with energy, oil, and gas. We have done all that because we had a lot of work that we needed to do.

The members opposite, again, with all due respect to them, I do not know if there is a day gone by where members have not come in the House – and I am sure there has been but if there has, there are not many – and ask for more. They ask for more and ask for more and ask for more. They ask for more programs. They ask for more services. They ask for more structures.

That is their job, I appreciate that. It is the members' opposite responsibility to identify what they think are shortcomings of a government and to come after government and say you should do that and you should do this, but we cannot be everything to everybody. We simply cannot be everything to everybody. You need an awful lot of money to be everything to everybody. As much as we have had available to us and the investments we have made, we cannot be everything to everybody.

Mr. Speaker, nobody saw what began to transpire in 2014 with the world oil prices. Nobody saw that coming. Nobody saw it coming. The provinces in Canada never saw it coming. Canada never saw it coming. It came upon us; we are in the circumstances that we had. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, it was

completely beyond our control; completely beyond the control of Alberta who has significant challenges. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Canada are all impacted by this, but we have to deal with it. We have a responsibility to deal with it.

I am a believer in talking to frontline people and looking after your own house and those kinds of things. It was referenced here today about the primary health care summit that we held this week: 300 people in a room, a great exchange of views. I think it is going to make great advancements in health care because we have to find a different way to deliver services.

We went to the people who deliver the services. I said let's go right to the heart of the people who deliver the services. Let's put them in a room and let's find out how we do it better. Let's ask them how you do it better. It was a great event. It was organized very, very well and professionally done. The response from it, that I received, was overwhelming, Mr. Speaker; overwhelmingly positive in the work that was done by the staff.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** All credit, Mr. Speaker, to the staff and employees in the Department of Public Engagement and the work they did, and the minister. They did a fabulous job and collected data. It could not have been done better anywhere, I would say, Mr. Speaker. It was very well done.

As we make those decisions as we move on, every million dollars we find is going to have an impact on somebody. Every million dollars we find, and every thousand dollars in a program cut or change that occurs has an impact on somebody. I would say if we lined up at the door of the House of Assembly or in government today, down over the steps of Confederation Building because it is a long line, and we had a big line of people who receive funding from the government, and we said come in now and tell us what you think about us reducing our budget, every one of them, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, will have a reason why, yes, you should reduce the budget but do not touch me. Do not reduce mine, and here is why you should not reduce mine.

I know if I was an organization, a voluntary organization or an organization that provides important services to people of the Province – because they do, Mr. Speaker. Those types of organizations are critical to the success of our Province. They do great things in our Province. If I was one of them and I knew there was a chance I was going to have my budget cut, I would be up calling the minister, writing the minister, or knocking on the door. If I had a chance to line up and come in and make my case, I would be there. I would be sitting in a room saying yes, you should reduce the budget, but here is why you should not touch me. This is why you should not reduce me.

Mr. Speaker, we can all do that. Members of the House can sit here and say yes, we should reduce the number of seats, but let's not do it today. Do not do it to me. Do it to everyone else but do not do it to me. It is easy to do that.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible).

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I say to the Member for St. Barbe, yes, it is easier for you to do that. Do it to someone else but do not do it to me. I hear you. I hear what the Member for St. Barbe is saying over there.

Mr. Speaker, we need to start in our own house. We already agree; all three parties already agree that we should reduce the size of the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe standing on a point of order.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I do not mind the Premier saying something that I said, if in fact he did, but I do object to him saying something that I did not say. It is a misrepresentation to the people of the Province and to the House, so I ask him to withdraw that.

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

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Premier.

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

It is important for us to say – if we are going to expect others to feel the implications of the financial challenges that we face, Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to do it as well. We have to be willing to do it.

Let's look at our pensions. There is an independent process as well that reviews MHAs' pensions and compensation. That is why I am asking, let's review those pensions. That is why I am saying it is important to look at the day-to-day operations. While it does not have any direct, significant financial implications, let's look at the day-to-day operations. Is there a better way to do it? Also, let's look at the size of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we have all agreed to reduce the size of the House. So instead of waiting to –

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, instead of waiting until 2019 for that to come into effect –

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

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

I ask members for their co-operation.

The hon. the Premier to continue.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, in order for us to do this in the House of Assembly it requires a change in legislation. The normal budget process – which we are all working on and we are all having discussions about avenues that we can follow to deal with the difficult fiscal circumstances that we have. One of those avenues is to reduce the size of the House of Assembly today. Do it this year before the next election, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, if we reduce the House by ten members, by a four-year term – because the difference in doing 2019 from now is a four-year term; that is forty years, forty

years of salaries, forty years of accruals. It reaches about a \$10 million mark over four years.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard members opposite talk about, well, \$10 million is really not a big amount of money in the big picture. It is a small percentage of the total amount, there is no doubt. The total amount of what we are facing, \$10 million is a small amount but it is a lot of money. It is a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. It is a lot of money that we need to consider doing that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have said and I have been asked questions about so many topics by members opposite – they asked some questions today about Cabinet and parliamentary secretaries. They asked about, are you considering this and are you considering that? When we were down at the health forum last week one of the reporters asked me: Are you considering cutting the health care budget? I have said, as I have said again, everything is on the table, Mr. Speaker.

So we do that, we make those decisions as we go through a Budget process. As the Budget time approaches – we know the federal government just announced what seems to be a delay in their budget process. We have to wait for the federal government to do their budget. We will get to our Budget, all in due course, Mr. Speaker. We will get to our Budget in due course, and we are doing that process. In order for us to do this part, in order for us to bring the reform to change the size of the House of Assembly, we have to do it today.

Now, members opposite are making great suggestions. I welcome all suggestions on how we can reduce the cost to government – all suggestions. I welcome all suggestions, I say to members opposite, on how to reduce the cost of operations of government. I am open to all of that, but the difference in the House of Assembly reform in the number of seats –

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** – is we have to do it through legislation. The legislation we are



going to debate later this week is about changing the date.

We will still have an independent commission. The Supreme Court Chief Justice will appoint a chairperson. The Speaker will appoint a four-person committee to work with that chairperson. It is an independent process. We will give them a period of time. It will be laid out in legislation. It will be discussed at length in debate, Mr. Speaker – as my time runs out. It will be discussed during debate about what we are proposing in the bill to amend the act. We will have a full debate on it.

I welcome the debate. That is why we are here. Let's have the debate. Let's do it, but let's not delay the process because I think just to delay the process may be seen as an effort to push it past 2015, which I do not want that to happen. I do not think the people of the Province want that to happen. I think they want the process done so we can have it in effect for the election in the fall of this year, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I support that process. What I say to members opposite, let's have the debate. Let's ask the questions. Bring forward your amendments. Let's debate your amendments. Let's have discussions about your amendments. Let's consider the amendments that you are proposing. Let's have a look at them and then we will give consideration to them. All parliamentarians here in the House should do that. We should all have a look at that, Mr. Speaker, and then let's move on with doing the business that we have to do. Let's be willing to make the hard decisions.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Let's not put off those decisions until 2019, Mr. Speaker. Let's do it today and do what is right for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

The hon. the Government House Leader is standing to speak to Address in Reply?

**MR. KING:** No, Mr. Speaker, I am standing to adjourn debate on Address in Reply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. KING:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Address in Reply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that debate be now adjourned.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, debate adjourned.

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

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

Earlier today I gave notice of a motion to move forward with electoral boundaries changes, Bill 42. I am asking if the House would give leave for me to move that to first reading at this point in time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does the Government House Leader have leave to move to first reading?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No leave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** No leave.

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

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

At this time, I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

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