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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today I would like to recognize several members of the Community Coalition 4 Mental Health along with co-chair Megan Barnhill.

We also have with us a group of students from Holy Heart High School today.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have statements from the Member for the District of Bellevue, the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale, the Member for the District of St. George's – Stephenville East, the Member for the District of St. John's East, and the Member for the District of Carbonar – Harbour Grace.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the good work of Annette and Chris Higdon from New Harbour. On September 20, 2014, about 100 residents of New Harbour and surrounding areas participated in the Red Shoe Crew-Walk for families.

The Ronald McDonald House was started thirty-five years ago and is now worldwide. It is a place for the families of sick children to stay. The Red Shoe Crew-Walk is a fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House where all donations and items raised go to support the annual operation of Ronald McDonald House in accommodating sick children and their families from across the Province.

The walk in New Harbour started and ended at the Lions Club and they raised \$25,000 for the house. In total, more than 3,200 people participated from thirty-six communities throughout the Province on the weekend of September 20-21, 2014. The total amount raised in this Province was \$242,000, along with about \$45,000 worth of donated items.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Annette and Chris on their appreciated efforts and great work in organizing this event.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to extend congratulations to three very bright and dedicated young ladies who received \$1,000 Electoral District Scholarships from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. From Bay d'Espoir Academy, sisters Whitney and Kendra Willcott-Benoit, and from King Academy, Kelly Stone, excelled in their academic studies and received the highest marks based upon public examination results. We are very proud of their achievement and wish them the very best of luck as they pursue their post-secondary education.

Attaining academic excellence is a great and rewarding challenge, and I know these fine young women are well positioned to succeed as they continue their journeys on different career paths. As they entire life with almost endless choices and countless possibilities the proven qualities of perseverance, dedication, and resilience coupled with great initiative will serve them very well indeed. The tools they have acquired through their strong work ethic will certainly allow them to accomplish their dreams in the years ahead.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Whitney, Kendra, and Kelly. With what they

have achieved already, there is no doubt that they have very bright futures ahead of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the friendly, picturesque community of Beachside for its first ever Come Home Year celebrations. From July 25 to August 2, the cozy community hall was packed as people from all walks of life and from near and far converged upon the quiet town, which I might add is the current Speaker's hometown.

Co-chairs of the organizing committee, Tonya Pelley and Betty Lou Young, are to be applauded, not only for their strong leadership but also for their extraordinary dedication and hard work. The committee worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone would enjoy themselves and go away happy that they attended. Without their vision, the opportunity for people to meet, rekindle faint memories, and forge new relationships simply would not have happened.

Also, the whole town and the surrounding people are to be commended for supporting the celebrations. It is events like these that not only drop extra funds in the community's coffers but also promote community spirit, community pride, and community sustainability.

I am delighted to ask all colleagues in this hon. House to join me in sending accolades to the community of Beachside for its first ever successful Come Home Year celebrations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Without bias, I agree with the member; Beachside is a great, little town.

The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate a group of curlers from Stephenville who became the provincial champions at the under-21 men's curling championship recently. The team includes: Skip, Greg Smith; Third, Ryan McNeil Lamswood; Second, Kyle Barron; Lead, Craig Laing; and Coach, Scott Lamswood.

The team will now represent Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2015 national junior men's curling championship, which will take place at the Corner Brook Curling Club from January 24 to February 1. The team has played at the Atlantic level in the past and are now looking forward to having an opportunity to play against the best in the country.

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland team will be playing at the Corner Brook Curling Club from January 24 to February 1. It is a tremendous opportunity for the hometown fans to get out and support the team. I encourage everyone to do so, and I also call on members of this House to show our support for the team from Stephenville.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On September 6 last year, I had the absolute delight of attending a party celebrating a rare and wonderful event, the sixtieth wedding anniversary of Eugene and Jessie Ryder of St. John's East.

Jessie, née Whiffen, and Eugene are both originally from Bonavista, where they were married in 1954. When you think of how our Province and city has changed in the length of time that they have been married, Mr. Speaker, you only need to know that before leaving the paid workforce to raise her family, Jessie worked at the old Ayre's supermarket on Parade

Street and at the Candlelight restaurant here in the city.

Eugene in his lifetime worked for Canadian Marconi, ITT, the Canadian Coast Guard, and then spent more than twenty years as a taxi driver – so you can see why I like him very much, Mr. Speaker, we have a connection.

They have three children, two daughters and a son, and just one grandchild, whom they are very proud of, a young man who has just started law school at the University of New Brunswick.

It has been a full marriage, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure you that after sixty years they can still throw a great party.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Eugene and Jessie Ryder of St. John's.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the St. Francis Robotic Team, also known as the RoboDogs, from Harbour Grace on winning the Provincial Lego Robotics title on Saturday, December 4.

The RoboDogs won first place in the Robotic Performance category, second place in the Project Presentation category with the design of an interactive classroom, the Skills Canada Gold Medal in Robotics, and first place overall.

Members of the RoboDogs team include Mitchell Peach, Madison Squires, Emma Mercer, Abigail Chafe, Hope Finlayson, Kiera Legge, Kyla Mercer, Katie Shute, Emily Galway, and coaches Norm Littlejohn and Randy Dobbin, who have been with the team for years. The team was a crowd favourite at the competition because of their sportsmanship and interaction.

As provincial winners, the RoboDogs have received an invitation to attend the World Festival International Robotics Competition being held in St. Louis, Missouri, in April. This is a worldwide competition that will include eighty-five Lego teams from over thirty countries, including six teams from Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the RoboDogs on winning the Provincial Lego Robotics title and wish them every success at the World Festival in St. Louis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to note that today is Weedless Wednesday, an annual event held during National Non-Smoking Week in Canada. The purpose of Weedless Wednesday is to encourage smokers to stop smoking today, and to let it be the start of a process of quitting for good.

Sooner or Later, Everybody Quits is the theme of National Non-Smoking Week, with the point being that smokers may want to choose their own quit date, before it's chosen for them.

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. It can also be a very difficult process, and it does not always happen with the first attempt. We recognize that, Mr. Speaker. That is why, as a government, we continue to support programs and services designed to help people quit smoking, and to prevent them from ever starting.

Mr. Speaker, this past October, we launched a \$700,000 Provincial Smoking Cessation Program for individuals with low income, which allows adults who meet eligibility requirements under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program to have access to two

smoking cessation medications (Champix and Zyban) to help them in their efforts to quit. The Province also supports the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco and the Newfoundland and Labrador Lung Association's Provincial Smokers' Helpline, which hears from about 1,400 individual callers each year.

Tobacco control in Newfoundland and Labrador takes a comprehensive approach that includes public education, legislation, school and community policies and programs, and the taxation of tobacco products. And we are seeing positive results, Mr. Speaker.

The rate of smoking in this Province has decreased from 29 per cent in 1999 to 20 per cent for those aged fifteen and older. While this is still high, the good news is that the rate among young people aged fifteen to nineteen has gone from almost 30 per cent to just over 12 per cent, while the rate for those aged twenty to twenty-four has gone from about 38 per cent down to 24 per cent.

This is encouraging, Mr. Speaker, because we know that a healthier population today means a reduced burden on the health care system of tomorrow; but more importantly, it means an increased opportunity for individuals to live longer, happier, healthier lives.

I invite my colleagues in this House to join me in recognizing Weedless Wednesday and to provide whatever support they can to family members and friends who are trying to quit.

Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity to attend an event this morning sponsored by the Smokers' Helpline, the Lung Association, and Eastern Health. Heart and Stroke were there. There is one message they wanted me to get out: For those who smoke, on the cigarette pack there is a toll-free number. If they call that, they get the Smokers' Helpline and there are people there to assist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition would also like to recognize Weedless Wednesday as awareness to encourage people to stop smoking. It is still a problem, especially among our younger generation. It is certainly not only among our younger generation, as I know we have colleagues here in the House who are in the process of trying to quit smoking as we speak. I encourage them in that effort.

While we have taken stands on smoking, we know that smoking remains the largest preventable cause of death. I am very lucky in my lifetime that I never had the opportunity to smoke. My parents did not smoke, which was very unusual in that era. My dad was at sea all his life.

I know as a teacher, as a principal, I had students say to me at one point in time: Mr. Hillier, how come you did not smoke? My answer was I guess it was just luck of the draw because at that point in time any of us could have –

AN HON. MEMBER: Pardon the pun.

MR. HILLIER: Pardon the pun. I apologize; I am not an English teacher.

While the number of smokers in the Province is in decline, we have a long way to go before we can claim to fully kick this habit.

Thank you very much.

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. It is really good to see that we do have an improvement in smoking cessation, but we still have a far way to go.

After years of calling for help for people to access smoking cessation drugs, I am glad government finally introduced assistance for low-income people where rates can be high. I

am glad there is a pay-as-you-go option for payment of full prescriptions because many people find it difficult to pay upfront for costly medications.

I do ask the minister to consider the need to extend the program to low-income persons and seniors who are not eligible for the Access program when it comes to paying for medications, and to make the treatment available more than once a year. We know it is a hard addiction to get rid of.

I am lucky enough that the two times I tried as a teenager to smoke, I inhaled and choked and said it was not worth it. Once you are addicted, I know that it is very difficult.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today as the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to announce the release of a new action plan to create a culture of environmental sustainability within government's own operations.

In 2011, our government released strategic frameworks for taking action on climate change and energy efficiency in Newfoundland and Labrador. Progress on these important issues requires action by all, and it is critical that government continues to demonstrate strong leadership.

Mr. Speaker, the *Greening Government Action Plan* outlines forty-six commitments across five strategic objectives. These objectives are: increasing waste diversion; improving the sustainability of government buildings; integrating green considerations into transportation decisions; increasing the procurement of environmentally preferable products and services; and effectively engaging employees on each of these issues.

There are many benefits to improving the environmental sustainability of our operations, Mr. Speaker. Saving energy has the potential to lower operating costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which is an important step in addressing climate change. Additionally, increasing the demand for environmentally preferable products and services can generate new business opportunities in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, the *Greening Government Action Plan* builds upon the significant steps we have already taken towards improving the environmental sustainability of our operations. Actions to date include ensuring new government buildings are constructed to meet environmental standards, transforming our fleet to include 34 per cent fuel-efficient vehicles, and developing guidance to integrate green considerations into procurement.

I look forward to the implementation of this action plan across government, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to take practical steps to improve the environmental sustainability of our operations.

Mr. Speaker, I will table this report for my hon. colleagues. The report is also available online.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Investment in environmental sustainability is important and this government has been a poor leader in ensuring that their operations are run in the most efficient manner. They have abandoned much of the 2007 Energy Plan and of creating a culture of conservation.

In December of 2013, I requested the details of all the energy audits conducted on government buildings since 2011. The response was only twenty-six sites of which energy audits were conducted. That is right, only twenty-six sites in a three-year period, yet this government continues to spend millions heating vacant schools and other buildings.

I asked for an inventory of all energy-efficient and hybrid vehicles in government's inventory since 2011, listing only six new vehicles that fit that criterion in a two-year period. So either government has a very small fleet or many more vehicles have gone missing from their inventory. When asked about government's pilot project on new energy efficiency advice servicing the House and the plan, it was noted fiscal restraints made it impossible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

This government has to lead by example, Mr. Speaker. In putting together the action plan they should also allow municipal governments to have enough funding so that they can carry out the necessary changes to their own infrastructure to put such climate change and energy efficiencies in place, energy efficiency programming.

Energy efficiency and climate change is everybody's business, Mr. Speaker, and the fiscal means should be put in place to allow everybody in the Province to participate.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier says he is concerned about the deficit and will make the tough decisions, but he has yet to show leadership and cut the size of his Cabinet or cut the Parliamentary Secretaries. In

fact, the only move that this Premier has done with his Cabinet is to increase one since becoming Premier, and that increase was an unelected minister.

I ask the Premier: Will you finally show courage and cut your Cabinet today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we as a government in the Province – in our Province we face a very significant challenge, fiscal challenge, as a result of the world oil prices that are having an impact on Newfoundland and Labrador and other provinces in Canada, and other countries in the world. I have said that here repeatedly in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

I have also said repeatedly, and I will say it once again, is that we are considering all avenues that are available to us to deal with those very difficult fiscal challenges, Mr. Speaker, and that includes all of our operations of government. It includes Cabinet, as I said; yes, it is on the table. Parliamentary Assistants are on the table, Government House Leaders are on the table, Whips are on the table. Everything is on the table, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are a lot of tables in the government, I would say, Mr. Speaker. I cannot imagine what it is like in some of those offices within government these days with lots of new tables coming in; but, I remind the Premier, it is not what you say, it is what you do. Show the courage to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, do the right thing, cut the size of your Cabinet.

In 1993, the Mahoney Commission on electoral boundaries in our Province was very clear. All representations to the commission had to be

matters of public record and open for public scrutiny, but now the Department of Justice is delaying us access to records while they review them and see if there is any redactions that are required.

I ask the Premier: All these presentations were supposed to be public, so why are you delaying the release and considering redactions?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: I will speak as long as he does not cut my position, Mr. Speaker. I am prepared to stand.

I thank the member opposite. I am not totally familiar with the details of the question, but I will say to the Opposition Leader that there are a number of nuances in both reforms. As I understand it, there was a public commitment made at one level that those who submitted presentations –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask members to listen to the answer that is being provided.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding is that in one particular reform there was confidentiality assured to those who submitted presentations. In the second reform mentioned, that was not the case, but I am prepared to follow-up on that and table the information tomorrow to clarify that for you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: While the minister is seeking clarification – I understand today that he is doing two jobs – but one thing we will not need clarification on is this. There was no Bill 29

when these presentations were given to the boundary commission in 1993, but this government is now trying to hide these presentations under the privacy legislation. Even with the draconian Bill 29, that will allow Cabinet documents to be released after twenty years. Well, guess what, Mr. Speaker? It is over twenty-one years since these presentations were given.

I ask the Premier: The commission was very clear that these records were to be made public; will you release them today?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition, I do not mind multi-tasking. I will take on lots of challenges over here and do my best with each one.

I certainly make the commitment to you, absolutely, that any documents that are available to the public will be made available. As I said a few moments ago, my understanding is that we have a legal obligation to ensure we do not violate anyone's rights.

I am also advised that all of the documents for one particular review have been forwarded and made available to the public through the Legislative Library. I will entertain today to make sure that the others are provided right away.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems a lot of scrutiny for a presentation that was supposed to be made public and it is twenty-one years old. One more question on that for the minister before I finish in this line of questioning.

We asked the Justice Library for a copy of the presentations and first they said they had to be redacted. Then they said we would have all presentations within one hour un-redacted. Then suddenly they said there could be redactions and the process could take days.

I ask the Premier: These presentations are twenty-one years old and they were supposed to be public; why do you need to review them? Why would you need to review a public presentation before you release them?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said a few moments ago to the hon. the Leader of the Opposition, my understanding is that we have made available to the public all of the documents from the first House of Assembly reform. I cannot answer as to why officials would feel the need to do as he suggested they have done. I really cannot respond to it.

What I will do is I will commit – in the next Question Period, I will certainly be prepared to provide you with further information to clarify any misunderstanding that might have occurred and ensure that the documents are made available in as quick an order as possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the unelected Minister of Justice is denying the Opposition access to papers that are over twenty-one years old, that were made public in the first place.

I ask the Premier: Will you overrule Minister Manning and do what is proper, release the documents now?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To be clear, it was my understanding in the last question that the Leader of the Opposition asked, that it was not the minister but it was actually officials that they have been dealing with on this. So to be clear, my understanding is it was not the Minister of Justice, it was officials who have suggested that they need to review the documents.

As I said a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I realize the Member for Bay of Islands gets excited when I answer questions, but I just ask that he let me have time to answer the question that I have been asked by the member opposite.

As I said a couple of moments ago, one set of documentation documents have been provided at the Legislative Library, I am told, and I will entertain moving forward right away today to find out what the holdup is on the others. I will provide further information tomorrow to clarify any misunderstanding or misinterpretation, but it would be the objective of government to make sure all of those documents are available to members of the public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we are hearing now from the Government House Leader that officials in the Department of Justice are redacting documents apparently on their own accord.

I ask the minister: Would you please ask the Minister of Justice why her officials are redacting documents that were made public twenty-one years ago?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member asking the question probably did not hear what I was saying because of the heckling that was going on at the time, but I think Hansard will reflect tomorrow morning, I believe, that it was the Leader of the Opposition who suggested that officials were redacting. I did not say any such thing.

What I said was I would investigate the allegations made by the Leader of the Opposition to try and determine why in fact that is happening, and at the same time –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He is excited again. I get that, but I will get my answer out in my thirty seconds.

I will entertain to provide all documentation that ought to be made public in a short fashion, and I will seek clarification on both lines of questioning that I can present to the House tomorrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Minister of Tourism is going to ensure that the Minister of Justice is doing her job, but I think this falls on the Premier, who appointed the minister in the first place. They are saying that they are going to release information that ought to be released. Well, I would say when the report was done, Justice Mahoney said it should all be published.

So I say to the Premier: You do not need to wait until tomorrow; you can do this right now. Will you stand here in this House and ensure that we get all the information that your Department of Justice and your unelected minister are not making available?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To be clear, I am actually the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, Responsible for the Research and Development Corporation, and Government House Leader. I say to the member, check Hansard. It was not me who suggested officials were redacting information; it was the Leader of the Opposition who said, unequivocally, that you were unable to get access because officials were withholding information.

My response is the same as I have given in the last five questions. I will seek to find out clarification on that. I am prepared to table that information tomorrow. One set of information you asked for has been made public, and I will move right away to make sure that the remaining information you seek will be made available publicly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier called this special session of the House of Assembly. The documents that we are being denied, apparently under Bill 29, pertain directly to Bill 42 and the debate we are having right now. The Department of Justice, and I would assume the unelected Minister of Justice, are denying the Official Opposition from having access to documents we need to have a proper debate. The Premier wanted a special session; we would like an informed debate.

So again, I ask the Premier, who is responsible for appointing this minister: Will you overrule this clear misjudgement, this abuse of the act, and release the documents that are supposed to be released and available to the public?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the member opposite is not understanding what the Government House Leader has – maybe the member opposite, I will try again, is not understanding what the Government House Leader has been saying here in the House this afternoon. He has made a commitment that he would look into the concerns raised by the members opposite. He will seek to have a resolution to this, a speedy resolution to this.

I do not think there is much more that he can say, or we can do, other than make the commitment that he will get to it at the very first opportunity, Mr. Speaker. He has committed to do that, and we fully support that process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I am glad to hear that the Premier fully supports the delaying of information to this House of Assembly. That is absolutely ridiculous. I would say to the Premier, what I do not understand is why documents that were supposed to be made public were suddenly redacted this morning when we requested them.

I say to the Premier: If you want to make tough decisions, if you want to take responsibility, will you stand here and promise us –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: – that we get this information right now and overrule your minister who is abusing her judgment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the member it is very strong language to be directing towards the minister. First of all,

the member likes to use the term Bill 29. I remind the member that if he wants to talk about Bill 29, ministers of the Crown have actually no role in redacting information or approving or disapproving.

There is an ATIPP co-ordinator who is a bureaucrat, an official of the department who controls that, which takes me back to the very first question asked by the Leader of the Opposition where he suggested they are having trouble with officials releasing information. It is nothing to do with making this an issue about the Minister of Justice, as my colleague opposite is trying to do here.

I am told, as I repeatedly say, that one set of information has been provided to the Legislative Library. I am also told that the second set of boxes of information just arrived at the department from storage today and it will be provided within the very near future. I will provide further information to clarify this tomorrow in Question Period, if the member will permit me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Business, Tourism, Justice, and the AG and whatever it is seems to know an awful lot about this process that he is not supposed to know anything about.

I ask the Premier again will you stand here in the House – we are here to debate Bill 42. We would like to have all the information we need to have, including the Mahoney Commission. Will you stand here and simply promise us that we can have it now and stop relying on your Bill 29 and your unelected minister to block the documents?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will correct the member on one thing; I am not the Attorney General. I do not have a law degree and I do not have the right to act as Attorney General in the Province. I never did, even when I was in the position of Minister of Justice before, for the record.

The other thing I would remind the member, if he wants to play politics with this, the question is why his government in 1993 did not release the information when they were in power, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Having said that, Mr. Speaker, my commitment remains firm as reiterated by the Premier. One set of information was made public today already through the Legislative Library. The second set, the boxes arrived today, the information will be made public.

I will seek clarification from my hon. colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, as to why there has been some confusion and misunderstanding between his office and officials. I am prepared to talk about that and table that information tomorrow, if they would like.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee the minister there is no confusion in the e-mail trail that we have from the Department of Justice and other officials in different government departments that are blocking these documents.

Almost four years have passed since government announced \$4.5 million to begin replacement of the Waterford Hospital. Another \$700,000 was committed in 2013 for planning.

I ask the Minister of Health: How much money has been spent to date on replacing the Waterford Hospital?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considerable funds have been invested to date and progress has been made. In fact, we suspect that site preparation for the new hospital to replace the Waterford Hospital will be completed in this current calendar year and construction of the brand new facility will commence in 2016.

I will get the exact figures on what has been spent to date, and I would be happy to table them in this House and provide them to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the government has spent a considerable sum to develop this plan that meets the mental health needs of today.

I ask the minister: You are in the middle of this process; you are saying that the new mental health hospital is not on the chopping block?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that there is anybody in this House who would suggest that the current Waterford Hospital is not in need of replacement. It is one of the oldest large health care facilities in our Province and while it has served us well, it is in need of replacement.

We have a master plan and functional program underway, and we have spent over \$500,000 to date on that process which demonstrates our commitment. We have also begun site preparations, as I have said, which will be completed later this year. It is a project that we are committed to. It will take time to build the

state-of-the-art facility that we intend to build, but we are very committed to the project, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, Bay St. George is facing a health care crisis. The clinic in Jeffrey's has been without a doctor for over a year now and the doctor in the Town of St. George's has left late last year. Residents are often left to travel long distances and wait long hours in the ER in Stephenville just to be seen by a doctor.

I ask the Minister of Health and Community Services: Can he provide an update on your efforts to resolve this health care crisis in Bay St. George?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would be happy to provide this hon. House with an update. I have had at least three different conversations with the member since he was elected on this very issue because it is an important one to our department, it is important to Western Health, and it is definitely important to the constituents that he represents. In fact, just yesterday in this House we agreed to have a conversation later today about this very issue, so I assume that he is still interested in doing that.

We have provided some capital funding in recent years to construct a new clinic in Jeffrey's. The vacancies in some of these communities are very concerning to us, and we are currently exploring new models that will make the delivery of primary health care sustainable in that region of the Province. It is time to try some new approaches. We have tried for years to recruit family doctors in certain areas. We will continue to try, but maybe it is time to be a little innovative, and I know the member shares my view on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, this situation has been going on for over a year. People have not been able to get the type of health care services they need.

I want to ask the minister: What new actions will he be taking to resolve this situation at Jeffrey's and St. George's?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I have had numerous discussions with the member on this issue, and I am happy to talk to anyone on the West Coast and in the communities affected about this very issue. Efforts have been ongoing to recruit physicians, and we have had doctors travel from Stephenville and Corner Brook to provide service to these communities, but it is clear that that is not a sustainable approach and we need to do more.

One of the ideas that came up at our health summit focused on primary health care last week was the use of other health care professions to deliver services in primary health care. Nurse practitioners, for example, have worked in various communities, including in the member's district.

So it is time to look at some new approaches, and I am prepared to work with Western Health and work with the communities affected to explore some of those options. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that is well underway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, this government has for the past eight years made promises to the people of Western Newfoundland on the new hospital, and there has been delay after delay. In light of the Premier's comment a few days ago

saying that everything is on the table, I have got calls from the West Coast and people are worried.

So, I am asking the Premier: Will the Western Regional Memorial Hospital be on the option table, or will you fulfill your commitment to the people of the West Coast of Newfoundland?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I appreciate the preview of the questions today, Mr. Speaker, because I had a conversation with the hon. member just this morning about the new West Coast hospital and the plans that are underway.

We have invested millions of dollars already in the planning process and in the preparation process, and the Western Memorial Hospital is another health care facility in this Province that is in need of replacement. We want to build a state-of-the-art facility that will meet the needs of the citizens of the West Coast not just now but well into the future.

There will be more services. There will be more beds. It will be a state-of-the-art facility that I think will serve us well for many years to come. We are very committed to it. I look forward to releasing the functional program and plans in the next number of weeks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, I am new to the House and I thought this was Question Period. I did ask the question is it on the chopping block, but let me continue. There has been a commitment from this government to begin the long-term care facility also in 2015. We have already seen many years of delay.

I ask the minister: Will the construction of the long-term care facility begin in 2015 also, or is that on the chopping block?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years we have expanded long-term care beds in numerous regions of the Province, but we still recognize that in each and every one of our health care regions there is still an incredible demand. The Western Region is no exception.

We have big demands for long-term care in Western, in Central, in Eastern, and in Labrador-Grenfell. The new long-term care facility will be a very important component of the new West Coast hospital campus. I look forward to getting that project underway in 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, government reported only \$28 million in environmental liabilities by 2013 year-end. Your government left taxpayers on the hook for avoidable environmental liabilities including accepting environmental costs for the Come By Chance refinery, hundreds of millions for the botched Abitibi mill expropriation, and other industrial sites.

Does the minister even know how much this government's environmental blunders will cost the taxpayers? Will he make this figure public?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, our officials are certainly aware and our government is aware of where the impacted sites are throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We are monitoring all the sites. We are doing assessments all the time. We are doing remediation work in certain sites as well. Hopedale, for instance, is one of those sites.

On the outside end of things, there have been numbers thrown around about Come By Chance

oil refinery, but they are the outside numbers, Mr. Speaker. Full remediation of some of these sites is not going to happen. Some remediation for some of these sites will be happening. It is very difficult to get to a finite number based on individual impacted sites throughout the Province.

It is not an easy question to answer, Mr. Speaker, but we are on top of this. We have a full inventory of impacted sites in this Province, and we are monitoring the situation very closely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: He should make those figures public, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General outlines the Public Sector Accounting Board's new standards. They demand that government's financial statement recognize the full cost of remediation of contaminated sites as a financial liability by 2015.

I ask the minister: Have you even undertaken an assessment of the full costing to clean up these contaminated sites, and will its value be recognized in the 2015 financial statements?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we value the Auditor General's input into this issue. We certainly have been taking his considerations very, very seriously. Again, what I stated earlier, we have everything under control. We know exactly what is going on in the Province in terms of impacted sites in Newfoundland and Labrador, on the Island portion and Labrador as well.

We are working towards identifying exactly what that number is, but, Mr. Speaker, it is a very difficult number to get to. On a case-by-case basis, there is a lot of work that needs to be done. Again, Mr. Speaker, that work is ongoing. We are protecting the environment for the

people of this Province for future generations. We take that responsibility very, very seriously. I know I do, and I will continue to do that work, and my department will as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Accounting standards state –

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is very hard to hear sometimes, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 42 mandates the electoral boundaries commission to do the review demanded by the bill within 120 days of the appointment of a chairperson.

I ask the Premier: Will he follow the commission's recommendation if it says it just cannot do the work in that short time frame?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: There appears to be a lot of questioning of the capabilities, the competencies of a commission yet to be appointed. There seems to be a lot of doubt about whether these people can do a piece of work within 120 days.

I read yesterday in the House, into the record, a piece of a report that came out in 2006 where the commission of that day said a future report could be done within six months. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have members standing periodically and asking questions about the ability to do this piece of work in 120 days. I would say let's get on with the debate, pass the resolution, appoint the commission and get at the work at hand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I invite the minister to do his mathematics. Six months is two months more than 120 days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: I ask the Premier now: That if the general election cannot be called by the legislated deadline, what will he do?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Maybe math was not my strong suit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: However, I was not too bad with English. Remember I said, Mr. Speaker, within six months. I was not equating 120 days to six months, I said within.

Mr. Speaker, let me repeat, the commission is not yet appointed. The plan is – and I am very certain and confident that Chief Justice Green will appoint someone who is very capable, very competent, and would fully understand before accepting the appointment what the task at hand would be. If Justice Green appoints a chair of that commission, and you, as the Speaker, appoint four other individuals, they will know

what the task will be before they accept that appointment. I am certain, capable competent people can do this piece of work.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am once again going to ask the Premier, because he has not answered the question this week. Why has he put this commission in place now instead of waiting for 2016?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member opposite is well aware that the commission was scheduled to take place next year in 2016. The results of the work done by the commission would not take place until 2019. The hon. member opposite asking the question is in agreement that we should reduce the size of the House of Assembly. The Leader of the Opposition is in agreement that we should reduce the size of the House of Assembly. I am in agreement that we should reduce the House of Assembly as well.

The commission was going to do the work next year, Mr. Speaker, and we have asked to do it a year earlier. That is what this bill is about. It is a year earlier. If you think about the fiscal crisis that this Province is facing, we need to find every opportunity to rightsize government and use every opportunity to take advantage, as we are doing right now, Mr. Speaker, to fix this fiscal problem that we have approaching all of us. This is going to have impact on every one of us in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, today we will debate a private member's motion calling for a select committee on mental health. In light of both the Premier's and the Leader of the Opposition's public acknowledgement of the need for committees and modernization of our Legislature and the critical need for an overhaul of our mental health services in the Province.

I ask the Premier: Will he support the motion to immediately strike on all-party select committee on mental health?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the debate today. I want to thank the Member for St. John's Centre, once again, for bringing what is a really important issue to the floor of the House of Assembly. I am sure we will have an informed debate today.

I honestly believe that a lot of the things that today's motion is calling for can be achieved another way. So, what I suspect we are going to argue about today is approach. We all agree there is more work to be done to address mental health services and to improve mental health services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We can look at the current state of mental health services. We can receive expert testimony. We can report on the findings; and, ultimately, we can put a new strategy in place to drive forward mental health and addictions services in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that is certainly our intention, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Member for Virginia Waters to present her petition, I just want to take a moment to bring everybody's attention to Standing Order 92, "Every Member offering a petition to the House shall confine himself or herself to the statement of the parties from whom it comes, the number of signatures attached to it and the material allegations it contains." In other words, to the subject of the petition. "In no case shall the Member occupy more than 3 minutes in..." presenting a petition.

I just wanted to remind all members of that. That any comment on the petition you are presenting shall be in relation to the subject matter of the petition and, indeed, your time limit is three minutes.

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 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 government to ensure that, with or without the completion of the work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing a commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirement to hold a provincial election in 2015.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I present this on behalf of members of the public from the District of Placentia – St. Mary's. The reason I present this petition, quite frankly, is there are many people in this Province who have grave concerns. Contrary to the Minister of Finance's comments earlier, many people have concerns about this commission's ability to do responsible work –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS C. BENNETT: I think it is Placentia – St. Mary's – responsible work in the amount of time.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to representatives of the last commission that was done here. I have spoken personally to representatives of the commission that was done in New Brunswick. I have also looked at – as is my responsibility I believe as a Member of this House of Assembly – every single jurisdiction across Canada. There is not one jurisdiction in Canada that has completed this work in less than 180 days. That does not include the amount of time required to allow Elections NL to do its operational work.

This government has repeatedly failed to recognize the operations that are underneath the legislation that they bring in and the impacts and ramifications that takes place. By rushing this particular piece of legislation and making sure that they put a time frame in that many people in the Province, people who are representative in all our districts believe is a time frame that is unreasonable, they believe that they are setting the commission up for failure, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition related to health care services in the Heatherton to Highlands area.

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

WHEREAS there has not been a permanent doctor in the clinic at Jeffrey's for almost a year; and

WHEREAS the absence of a permanent doctor is seriously compromising the health care of people who live in Heatherton to Highlands area and causing them undue hardship; and

WHEREAS the absence of a doctor or nurse practitioner in the area leaves seniors without a consistency and quality of care which is necessary for their continued good health;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take actions necessary to result in a permanent doctor or other arrangements to improve the health care services in the Heatherton to Highlands area.

Mr. Speaker, this situation has been going on for a while in Jeffrey's. It is over a year now that there has not been a permanent doctor in Jeffrey's. People are not able to get the health

care services they need. In St. George's just before Christmas, the middle of December, the doctor there left. So, the people in St. George's find themselves in a similar situation. They are having to travel long distances to obtain health care. They often have to wait in emergency rooms all day just to get simple things like a prescription refilled.

People are not getting the type of service they need, Mr. Speaker. Many seniors have called me and told me that they are not getting the care they need. They are not getting their test reports in a timely manner. This is how serious the situation is, and it has gone on for too long. People are frustrated and people are upset. It is fine to have hearings about health care, but if you cannot provide this type of basic service, it is not worth anything.

This has gone on too long – too long. We have to find a solution and it has to be found soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair has less than a minute to present her petition.

MS DEMPSTER: 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 humbly sheweth::

WHEREAS the community of Cartwright will be a gateway to the upcoming Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve; and

WHEREAS the establishment of a national park reserve, a tourism demand generator, will significantly increase the potential for tourism development in all communities of Southeastern Labrador; and

WHEREAS developing tourism in Southeastern Labrador will contribute to the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the communities and the people throughout the region;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to finalize the land transfer agreement with Parks Canada so as to allow for the establishment of the national park in the Mealy Mountains of Labrador to occur before the 2015 tourism season.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, since I do not have much time I just want to say this file has been ongoing since 2007 and I would urge the government to (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member her time has expired.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: In accordance with our Standing Orders, it now being 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, Private Members' Day, we must now go to the Member for St. John's Centre to begin debate on the private member's resolution that stands on the Order Paper in her name.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge government to immediately strike an all-party committee on mental health to conduct Province-wide public consultations, review the current state of provincial mental health services, receive expert testimony on best practices in mental health care delivery, and report its findings with the goal of improving mental health programs and services to better serve the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is seconded by the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy and honoured today to stand in this House to speak to this motion. Although this is a private member's motion it is not my sole motion, it is not the sole motion of my caucus, it is the motion of thousands of people across the Province who have come to town hall meetings, who have come to symposiums, who have written letters, who have signed petitions, who have made phone calls, who have contacted their individual MHAs, who are asking for this.

They are asking for it in desperation. They are asking for it in strength. They are asking for it in hope. They are asking for it from a place of expertise, a place of resilience. They are asking for it because they know it is needed. They are asking for it because they know it is the right thing to do. They are asking for it because they have trust in this House of Assembly to honour the work that needs to be done in the area of mental health services across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, just shortly, a little time ago, I read a tweet that was sent out by Amelia Curran who is one of our multi-Juno, award-winning singer-songwriters, who is an advocate in the area of mental health, and who is doing a lot of work right now, public work, talking about her own experiences of mental health, doing all kinds of work around mental health. She did a fantastic video called *This Video*. It is available through YouTube and it is about breaking down the stigma of mental health. She tweeted today, "Waiting on pins and needles to hear about today's petition being put forward in HofA".

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say that I know there are thousands of people in Newfoundland and Labrador waiting on pins and needles today to see how this debate will go in the House, to see whether or not their particular member, and whether or not each and every member in this House of Assembly will agree to work together, will agree to employ every single legislative tool we have as leaders to ensure that we can come up with the best possible mental health services in the Province. Because we know that not only the one in five people in Newfoundland and Labrador who suffer from mental health challenges are affected by mental health, but we also know that their families, their friends, their communities are also affected.

Sometimes this is a matter of life and death, and sometimes it is a matter of resilience and hope, and that is what we are talking about today. I particularly am encouraged by the people who come to the gallery who are concerned. There are people watching all over the Province online in our debate, and our debate is about hope today.

Our debate is about modernizing our Legislature. Our debate is about the possibility of all of us working together on an issue that the Minister of Health himself, on December 8 in this House of Assembly, said: I would like – this is after I had presented a petition on behalf of the thousands of people who are concerned about the issue of mental health. Everybody in the House, it was a very unusual day in the House that day.

I presented a petition on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Official Opposition decided they wanted to get up and speak to that petition because they knew how important it was. Then the Minister of Health decided he, too, wanted to get up and speak on the petition. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, people in this House were scrambling to get up to speak to the issue that was addressed in the petition.

The Minister of Health, on December 8 said – and I am taking an unusual step here today, Mr. Speaker, as well. I want to honour the words of the Minister of Health because I believe he is truly concerned about the issues of mental health services in the Province, mental health and addiction services. I also truly believe he wants us to be able to provide the best services we possibly can.

Our task today is to convince him, his party, and his caucus that the best way to address this is to do a thorough investigation, a comprehensive investigation, a thorough consultation process that has been done by other parties and by other governments across the country and across the Commonwealth. This is our task today, to convince him that it is absolutely crucial we all work together.

He said, "I would like to talk about mental health. I would like to talk about one of the highest priority issues facing our Province and

also facing the Department of Health and Community Services.”

“I want to assure everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador that we are well aware of the challenges people are facing with mental health and addictions issues in this Province. It is a real concern and it is a growing concern. Access to timely and appropriate care and supports is absolutely essential.”

“Mental health and addictions issues will inevitably touch most of our lives. In fact, one in five people in Newfoundland and Labrador will experience mental illness of some form in their lifetime. More than any other illnesses, these are illnesses that are pervasive and they affect everyone, either directly or indirectly, through a family member, through a friend, through a colleague.”

He also went on to say, “We do provide about \$100 million annually for mental health and addictions programs and services.”

Mr. Speaker, in this time of economic uncertainty, we have heard this bandied about in this House for the past two days. The price of oil has plummeted. We know that there are grave, grave economic challenges facing this Province. What we have to do as legislators is ensure that every dollar that is spent is spent efficiently and effectively. That is our task as well.

Again, I am very happy to stand here today to speak on behalf of the many people who I am sure all of us, every single MHA in this House, have received calls from people who are suffering from mental illness crises, or their families, begging for help. Particularly in rural areas where we know there are huge gaps in services.

I want to thank all of those who work in the area of mental health and addictions. Our health care providers, our frontline workers, community groups who have been taking on more and more and more of the work, often with very limited resources. I want to thank the advocates who continue to raise the issue and push for change, and policy-makers, both elected and unelected, who know that mental health and addictions not only directly affect the one in five people in

Newfoundland and Labrador but everyone, because, again, we are all connected in our wonderful home of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to thank those who work with passion and compassion, with absolute commitment. I also want to particularly thank folks with lived experience, who have so courageously stepped forward to tell their stories in hopes of helping to create awareness, challenge stigma, and to push for better and more response services for all people who are dealing with mental health and addictions issues.

I cannot think of anything that takes more courage in this day and age than to step forward and to talk about your own experience as someone who is dealing with mental health issues, to publicly share that story, to publicly share your story about mental illness because of the devastating effects of stigma associated with mental illness. I want to thank those brave determined people again who work with passion and compassion.

In the past little while we have heard from the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. During his leadership campaign he said he would initiate House of Assembly reform within his first 120 days as Premier. He said, as well as identifying measures to increase parts, he wants to identify measures to increase participation by all members and improve efficiency and effectiveness in the House of Assembly. I would interpret that as using every possible tool available in this Legislature for us to be able to work together.

The Leader of the Official Opposition said if he was elected Premier he would make committees part of the Legislature. He said, “There will be an active committee structure in place in the House of Assembly. Absolutely.”

The leader of our caucus here repeated our party’s consistent call for active House of Assembly standing committees, which could deal with issues such as Muskrat Falls in more detail. She said, “I wish that that was the route that we had been following here.

“You can have a discussion in an all-party setting that’s more intimate and you can get

more details than the structure of the debate in the House.”

The Minister of Health, himself, in his leadership platform said, “I will form an all-party committee to guide the Open Government Initiative from action plan to fruition. Each year, in cooperation with this all-party committee, the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement will table an annual report in the House of Assembly. This annual report will provide an update on the progress of the Open Government Initiative and will set out the priorities and goals for the upcoming year.”

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that sounds like support for using a select committee in dealing with urgent and particular issues in this House. Again, the Minister of Health, in his leadership platform said, it “will set out the priorities and goals for the upcoming year.”

We know that we have to look at what is happening in our mental health services here in the Province. Last June, I had a mental health town hall. I expected about sixty people; there were over 300. People actually had to be turned away. At that town hall we heard the pain of people’s stories. We also heard potential solutions. We heard from experts. We heard from people with lived experience who are experts in their own experience. We heard from family members. We heard from general population. We heard from health care providers.

As a result of that, we heard that people wanted to get together again and really address issues like stigma. So then we had another event called The Launch, which was attended by over 1,000 people at Holy Heart of Mary Auditorium. It was a thing of beauty, Mr. Speaker, but it was the result of over thirty community groups and individuals coming together and meeting every Friday morning for months.

It was the coming together and working together with a common goal that resulted in such a successful event. The goal was not the event itself – and out of that event came the demand for an all-party committee, a challenge by all of these people who were working together, a challenge to this House to do the similar thing,

to work together, to work together to take on this huge task of mental health services –

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): I remind the hon. member her speaking time has expired.

MS ROGERS: – of coming up with this strategy for mental health services in the Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to hearing from the people in the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can sincerely say that I am honoured to have a chance to participate in this important debate this afternoon. It is a critical topic. Again, as I did in Question Period, I will do it again. I want to thank the Member for St. John’s Centre for raising this issue. I appreciate her kind words as well. I am sincere in my desire to make the system better. Members on all sides of the House, I believe, want to make the system better because this is a very personal issue. I would venture to guess that there is nobody in this House of Assembly or nobody watching the debate today who has not been touched by mental health and addictions in one way, shape, or form.

I think of my own family members and close friends who have had experience dealing with very difficult mental health issues. As the member rightly points out, one in five people in our Province, one in five people in our country will experience some form of mental illness during their lifetime.

I know that the member is very sincere in her desire to bring about change in our system and to make improvements. I can tell her, as I have personally, and I can share with members of this hon. House that I, too, am very committed to bringing about the kind of change and

improvements that are needed. While we have come a long way, no doubt we still have a way to go.

I did have a prepared speech to give today, but I would rather try to respond to some of the comments that the member has made and try to provide some more personal perspective on this issue that we are debating today.

The all-party committee issue is what we are really debating today, because I think we are in agreement on just about everything else, I would say, Mr. Speaker. When I look at the resolution that we are debating today, we are talking about reviewing the current state of provincial mental health services. I can assure you that the Department of Health and Community Services, under my leadership, is very much committed to doing that, not next year, not in six months, but right now.

We are ready to begin a consultation process that will result, over the next few months, in a brand new mental health and addictions strategy that will guide us forward for the next decade, to build on the work that has been done since the 2005 strategy was adopted.

The motion also references receiving expert testimony on best practices in mental health care delivery. As part of the process that we are about to embark upon, that is a critical component as well and it needs to happen. The motion talks about reporting findings with the goal of improving mental health programs and services to better serve the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Through the process that we are about to embark upon, I sincerely believe that we can achieve all of that. If I did not believe that, then I may very well be able to support the motion today.

What we are arguing about is not the need to do more around addressing mental health needs and improving services in this Province; the debate today is specifically about whether we should put an all-party committee in place. I do believe that the member opposite sincerely wants to see improved services; that is the ultimate goal. We need to find lasting solutions. I honestly do not believe that the all-party committee approach is the best way to achieve that.

The resolution that we are debating today is much about process and a lot of the debate even so far has focused on that. I think we need to focus on effecting change in the system. We have a process that can achieve that more efficiently and effectively that our department is about to roll out.

I sincerely think that we can achieve everything that an all-party committee could potentially achieve through the process we are going to roll out in the weeks ahead. It will be a full, Province-wide consultation process and everybody in the Province is welcome to get involved. We want to consult with over 500,000 people in the Province, not just politicians. We want to engage the public, not just all the parties that are represented in this House.

When we look at what is happening in other provinces, there are a few that have had a select committee or an all-party committee, but the vast majority have followed a similar process to what we followed, with considerable success.

One province just released in December a brand-new mental health and addictions strategy, which I have reviewed; I have it here with me today. The Province of Saskatchewan has done some good work. Many other jurisdictions in the country have as well. Rather than reinventing the wheel, a lot of the issues that we are facing when it comes to mental health and addictions services in the country are very much the same from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

I think we definitely need to learn from the experiences of others. The core issues are very similar. There is more demand for services today than ever before, and we need the health care system to be positioned to respond to that. The cost of services has increased, which is a challenge for every government in the country, and we somehow have to figure out how to deal with that.

People have told us, through town halls like the member hosted, through our primary health care summit, through regional forums that we have had in recent weeks and months, that access to these services is a critical issue that needs to be addressed.

Awareness is also a challenge as well. What we have also learned is that sometimes people just do not know where to go, they do not know who to call, and they do not know where to turn. As the Minister Responsible for Health and Community Services, that concerns me greatly.

We have a HealthLine; we have a Mental Health Crisis Line. We have hundreds of mental health service providers in our Province. That is not to say we do not need to do more. I am not suggesting for a second that the current service level is adequate, but there are a lot of resources that perhaps are not being utilized enough. Maybe people are not even aware that some of those resources exist. We have some work to do around that as well.

There needs to be a greater focus on recovery. We have seen that in some of the recent mental health strategies that have been rolled out in other jurisdictions. There needs to be a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. Those are the kinds of things that I would envision a new mental health strategy focusing on. In the next few months we want to embark on a consultation process that will allow everybody in the Province to have a say, because we want to make sure we get it right.

I am committed to driving the kind of change that is required. I am committed to addressing many of the points that are raised in the motion today. I do not believe we need to strike an all-party committee in order to do that. I believe the approach we are going to take will achieve better results faster, and perhaps more cost effectively as well, although getting the best results is certainly my primary concern, and I will be accountable for that.

The process we are about to embark upon is one that I would welcome all Members of the House of Assembly to get involved with, and all of your constituents as well. It is one that I am sure I will be reporting on regularly to this House.

We have a responsibility as a government to govern. We have a responsibility to show leadership on the issues that matter most to people in the Province. I know that mental health is top of mind for many people living in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As the Health Minister, on my very first day on the job, I gathered some of the senior folks in the department into our little board room and I outlined several priorities. At the top of the list was mental health. I really believe we can do better and I really believe we must do better. I believe society expects us to do better.

I think some of the solutions that we can arrive at we actually need to work with the community to put those solutions in place. We have many organizations and potential partners in the community that perhaps can deliver some of the services that are needed even better than we can. We are very open to that. That will all be part of the conversation that we want to have over the next few months.

If there is one issue as Health Minister I want to have an impact on and make a difference with in the months ahead, it is this one, I assure you. I am prepared to be held accountable for that.

All we are arguing about today is approach. We are not arguing about the need to do better. We are not arguing about the need for more support. We are not arguing about the need for a new strategy. We are arguing about what is the best way to achieve that. I sincerely believe the best way to achieve that is the approach we have been working on for several months.

The Member for St. John's Centre referenced this debate being about hope. I want to assure members of this House and, more importantly, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the general public, that there are lots of reasons to be hopeful. While we have come a long way over the last decade, we still have a long way to go, but we now are about to embark upon a process that will get us there. I hope that our new mental health and addictions strategy will be the best in the country and that others will look to us to show leadership.

I want to join the Member for St. John's Centre in applauding the work of the Community Coalition 4 Mental Health. I thought the launch event, that I know the member was personally involved in, was inspiring. I do want to also applaud those who had the courage and the strength to share their stories, because that is incredibly powerful.

The member also references the work of Amelia Curran. I, too, want to applaud that work. I saw this video. I have watched it many times. I have tweeted about it. I have posted on Facebook. I have encouraged others to watch it, both inside and outside this House.

I have also taken the opportunity on two occasions, maybe three, to meet with Ms Curran and Mr. Maunder, the producer of that video, to explore how we can get that message to more people, to explore how we can work together and perhaps collaborate to raise awareness about the need for more people to get involved in this process we are about to begin. Also, we want to let people know there is hope, they can effect change, and there is help available if they need it. That is something I will continue to work on, and I certainly appreciate the support we have received to date.

The community coalition can play a very important role in this process as we move forward. I have invited the community coalition to meet with me. I am looking forward to hearing first-hand their views and concerns. I hope they can be part of some of the solutions that we will work together on in the months ahead.

I have also appointed two of the leading members of the Community Coalition 4 Mental Health to our Ministerial Advisory Council on Mental Health and Addictions, and I will be meeting with that group over the next couple of weeks. I say that because I think that demonstrates how committed we are to working with those in the community who have raised these very serious issues and are committed to driving change, and are passionate about it. I think there is a vital role for those folks to play, and I really do welcome their input.

The advisory council we have in place contains a number of people who are also involved in the Community Coalition 4 Mental Health. These are people the Department of Health and Community Services, and other departments in government, are working with on an ongoing basis. I see a greater role for that advisory council. They are going to play a lead role in the consultations that are about to being.

Mr. Sheldon Pollett has been appointed as the interim Chair of the advisory council. He works with Choices for Youth, which is an outstanding organization helping some of our most vulnerable young people in this region. He is well aware of some of the challenges facing our population when it comes to mental health, particularly those facing our young people.

We have great people at the table we are willing to work with to drive change and to build a strategy that is going to improve mental health services in the Province. I would argue perhaps even transform mental health services in this Province.

There is a role for other parties to play as well. Debates like today are important. I know we have differing views on how to approach this challenge, and I respect that, but in terms of the process that we will roll forward with, I want the continued input of the Opposition parties.

We had the Premier's Summit on Health Care just last week. I was pleased that both Opposition parties actively participated. As they will recall, one of the major themes for the day was mental health and addictions. There were even some potential solutions that came about as a result of the discussions that occurred through that one-day process. Even in each of the regional forums that we held, and there were thirteen of them over the last couple of months, mental health was an issue that was discussed in each and every one of them.

Some of the solutions are obvious. We are challenged to redeploy resources and shift resources, and find new resources to make things happen. We have to be creative and we have to be innovative in doing so, but I believe we already know a lot of what we need to do.

So, for that reason, I am anxious to lead a public engagement process that makes sure we arrive at the right solutions, and then let's get the strategy in place. Let's debate it. Let's talk about it. Let's find out who in the Province and who in our communities can get involved in working with us to deliver on that and make it happen, because the kind of change that is needed is not change we can wait for years to attain.

Some of the systemic change that is needed will take time, but there are things we can do today and tomorrow. There are things we can do in the months ahead. I can assure you, the government that is led by our Premier is very much committed to taking action and showing leadership because we all recognize the importance of this issue.

I also want to assure you that our team at Health and Community Services is willing to meet with anybody who has a view to share, or a story to tell, or an idea, or a concern, or a suggestion on how we can improve mental health services in the Province.

I see the member opposite shaking her head. I can only stand before you, Mr. Speaker, and tell you that that commitment is a sincere one, and we really believe that we can bring the right people together to arrive at the solutions that are needed. We have to come up with a strategy in the next few months that is the right one. I do not think we need to study it for months. I do not believe we need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop it, because I do think that in some cases the solutions are obvious. So, let's make this work.

A select committee would turn this into an event, and an advisory council and the consultation process and the strategy ensures that this is a journey that is ongoing, that everybody in the Province can be involved in. We want to hear from people working in the system, from experts, from consumers, from families with lived experience, and I am confident we can build a strategy for the next ten years that will get us to where we need to be.

This cannot be about petitions and speeches –

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member his speaking time has expired.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just conclude by saying this has to be about people and solutions, and I am very much committed to that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy as the seconder of this motion to be able to stand and speak to it. I have been here with all kinds of ways in which to proceed and I am trying to decide which is the best one, but I think I am going to hit it head-on and that is respond to the minister's position with regard to the all-party committee.

My colleague has eloquently expressed the needs in the Province. I know in her summation today she will do that again, the needs with regard to mental health care in the Province. She has been eloquent in this House over the past months when we were sitting in the fall and in the spring with regard to mental health.

What the minister seems to be caught up on is the whole issue of an all-party committee. I want to speak to this issue to try to get him to understand why we think the all-party committee is necessary. Just a couple of days ago, January 15, I think – I am put off by the fact that we are in the House in January, so I am getting my dates mixed up. I am forgetting what month I am in because I think this is history making that we are sitting here in January.

On January 15, the Premier sent a letter to the Speaker of the House and has asked the Speaker of the House to look at a number of things to help us work better in this House of Assembly. That specifically is one of the things that the Premier has asked the Speaker to do: to put in place our Standing Orders Committee, which we do have, which never meets, but we have it. I think I am on it. To put that committee in place and to ask it to look at how we operate in the House of Assembly.

The issue of all-party committees or standing committees has been spoken about publicly by the Premier and I think even by the Minister of Health and Community Services. I remember some years ago when I first brought up the issue here in the House of Assembly, the whole issue of standing committees which are all-party committees and the fact that they exist elsewhere in the country, and that we really need to use

that structure more here in our Legislature to have a more democratic process, the minister was not a minister then and he actually one day said to me: Lorraine, I would like to talk to you a bit about what it is you are talking about when you bring up standing committees in the House. He and I had a chat about it. We are going to have another chat about it today, Minister, and why I think we need it.

We have a Standing Orders book. For those who are not part of this House – this is the second time today by the way I think somebody stood with the Standing Orders book. I think the Government House Leader used it either today or yesterday. Everything that is the rules to run how we operate here is in this book. We refer to it, the Speaker refers to it, and House Leaders refer to it. Under Order 65 or from Orders 65-70 we have Standing Orders that deal with committees.

The first committees that it deals with, you have Standing Order 65. It has five sections to it and one section has seven parts to it. It describes what standing committees are, who the standing committees are in terms of what the titles of the standing committees are, and what the function of a standing committee is. The Standing Orders also talk about how many people, what would be the maximum number for a standing committee, what they deal with, et cetera.

Under section 65(5) it says that the standing committees are directed by the Legislature. The Legislature gives the work to the standing committees. What they are then supposed to do is to examine and inquire into all such matters as may be referred to them, and to report from time to time, and except when the House otherwise orders, they can send for people to come in, witnesses to come in. They can have access to papers and records that are needed. They can take that evidence and make recommendations back to the House. They have the power to get the information that as individuals we do not have the power to do here in the House and as MHAs.

The all-party standing committees could be doing so much work. Legislation, for example – and my colleague referred to when I stood in the House and talked about Muskrat Falls. If our Resource Committee – there is a Resource

Committee on paper. At the time of Estimates, we discuss the budgets. That Committee can sit down and quiz the Department of Natural Resources, for example, on how the money is being spent in that department and what is going on inside of that department; but that is the only time that Committee gets directed by this House to do anything.

If that Resource Committee had been operative all year-round, as our Standing Orders say they are – they say they are operative all year-round. If they operated all year-round, that Resource Committee could have taken the legislation around Muskrat Falls, could have had a full and open debate in the Province, could have gone around the Province and held public consultations, and all the people who were trying to get their opinions out through talk shows and through letters to the editor and in whatever way possible around Muskrat Falls, they could have come to open meetings held by an all-party committee in an open and transparent and accountable process and have been listened to and perhaps when we had gotten to the legislation here in the House itself, we may not have had to have filibustered for the numbers of days that we did because we might have been able to do something working together in an all-party committee. That is the purpose of an all-party committee.

They have them in Ottawa in the House of Commons, they have them in other provinces, and they work. It is surprising that even in Ottawa right now where we have, as we all know, a pretty intransigent Prime Minister, one of their all-party committees last year – the makeup reflects the Legislature, so the majority are the government people on it, but you have all the parties that are in Opposition are represented. One of the committees that they have actually made a recommendation to the government that the government did not particularly like, but the standing committee, which was dominated by the government people, made the decision to make the recommendation to bring a motion through. So, an all-party committee can be pretty powerful.

Now, you have the standing committees, but you also have select committees. I think that my colleague is aware of the fact that her motion, which I have seconded, is referring to a select

committee. A select committee does exactly what it sounds like. It is given a particular task to do, but the rules that guide it are the same rules that guide an all-party standing committee. A select committee is also an all-party committee and the rules that guide the standing committee guide them.

Now, I went through all of that because I am using this as an opportunity to help maybe start the discussion in the Province with regard to how we could be working better, and this motion is giving us the opportunity to do that, to look at why all-party committees are the way to go. One of the big reasons is because the all-party committee is accountable to the Legislature, not just to the government but to the Legislature. I have no problem with advisory committees to ministers.

In my past as a social justice activist in the Province, I actually sat at least twice on advisory committees to ministers and it was a good process. I have no problem with them. Advisory committees are important; however, if you have an all-party committee tasked to do something, that all-party committee is accountable to us here. Everybody in the Legislature has to receive the report from the all-party committee. The work they do has to be public. It has to be seen.

People who come and who present have to be – it has to be an open process. Obviously, there could be topics, and I think mental health care could be one of those topics where maybe there are times there have to be in camera meetings. Maybe if somebody wanted to come and meet, they do not want to be identified publicly. That could happen, obviously; however, the overall intent of an all-party committee is to be public, is to have the resources to make sure that everybody comes in and gets to say what they want to say.

With all due respect to the minister, and I appreciate the process they went through with the summit and with the regional meetings that led up to the summit that happened last week, one of the things I heard at the summit in my own experience was it was not open enough for just free discussion. We did not have enough time for free discussion.

I was glad I was invited by the Premier to be there, and I am glad that I went, but I heard people say we did not have enough time. It was a very planned session. You had to do your comments within the plan that was set, whereas if you have an all-party committee that is out in the community holding a hearing, people come and they say freely what they want to say. They do not have to do it within two minutes or three minutes. They can sit there and they can speak, and they can make sure that the all-party committee hears what is being said.

We have, as has been referred to, in the legislation, a rule that says there has to be a legislative review of our mental health care in this Province and how the legislation around mental health is being followed. There was a report in – well, they did their review in 2011. That was the first review, actually, under the new legislation. The committee that did the review – well, it was the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, certainly an organization that has people with expertise to do the work but not an organization that is accountable to the House of Assembly. It is not an organization that is ruled by the governing rules of all-party committees that would allow for the kind of process that all-party committees would follow if we followed our Standing Orders here.

Anyway, the centre did do its work. They did a report that was completed in April 2012, and released publicly in November 2013. Now, let's look at that. They did their work in 2011. They completed their work in 2012, and the government did not publicly put that report out until November 2013.

I would suggest to all of us to reflect on that, because if we had an all-party committee that had to be making regular reports to the House of Assembly – because that is one of the rules for the all-party committees – we would know in an ongoing way what the work of the committee was coming up with. They would have to make regular reports here to the House. We would know what they were finding. We would not have to be waiting two years.

I would like to recommend to the minister that 2016 is the next year for the review to be done of what is happening, according to our

legislation. It is every five years. The last study that was done was started in 2012. I would like to recommend to the minister that this would be such an opportune time to put a select committee in place because that select committee could do the work – this year, in 2015 – of gathering the information of what is happening in the Province, of doing that under the rubrics of our all-party committees, under our Standing Orders, which gives our committee so much power.

They could start the identification of issues in a much broader way than what the minister is suggesting. They could start that identification of issues. Then that committee would bring its recommendations here to this House and we, as the Legislature, could identify, for whoever is going to do the review in 2016, what it seems like the review should be focused on. The all-party committee has done its work coming up with the voice of people in the Province, the experience of people in the Province, telling us here in the House of Assembly what the issues are out there. Then those recommendations go to the group who is going to do the review in 2016 to see how to deal with those issues – not just identifying what issues are, but actually coming up with how to deal with them.

That is my recommendation to the minister. I am trying to explain to you why this process could actually do everything that you are talking about but do it in a way that is open, transparent, accountable, and accountable in a much broader way than an advisory committee to the minister.

That is not to insult you, Mr. Minister. That is not to insult anybody on the committee. I know the names of the people on the committee. They are wonderful people who I think would be delighted if there were an all-party committee put in place to do the work that is being referred to in the motion that is here on the floor today.

I am delighted the Official Opposition sees the wisdom of the all-party committee being in place. I would like to think the minister can change his mind between now and 5:00 o'clock and vote for this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind members of the gallery that you are very welcome to be here, but it is not appropriate to participate in the debate on the floor. I thank you for being here today, but it is not appropriate to participate in the debate on the floor.

Thank you so much.

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte –
Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly delighted to stand in this hon. House today to speak to this very serious, complex issue, illness that demands our fullest attention and that pervades every crevice in our society. My comments will be strictly geared to our social marketing campaign.

When you get an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to highlight mental illness and addictions, it is a good thing. More talk and more dialogue means that incrementally we are making a positive step, one more positive step in the right direction. One more conversation, one more dialogue, and one more motion is chipping away at the stigma of mental illness and addictions. We all want to slay this giant.

What is a stigma? The Mental Health Commission of Canada defines stigma as negative and unfavourable attitudes and the behaviour they produce. It is a form of prejudice that spreads fear and misinformation, labels individuals, and perpetuates stereotypes.

This cold, icy grip of mental illness tentacles reaches far and wide, Mr. Speaker. It has no respect of persons, cultures, ages, or families. It leads to exclusion, which leads individuals to internalize their negative feelings, which leads again to lower self-esteem, lower self-concept. This in turn, then, will lead to probably more isolation and more secrecy, and that person or

that individual suffering from mental illness will be very reticent in talking about their illness. They will keep it to themselves as a secret. So this stigma attached to this mental illness is very serious indeed. It is a real problem that needs our attention and needs everybody's attention.

Stigma against people with mental illness is oppressive. It alienates. It prevents many from seeking help, denies them access to the support networks and treatment they need in order to recover from the illness.

Stigma is pervasive. It often results in inequality in employment, housing, education, loss of family, and, yes, friends as well. This is a very eye-opening statement: Many people living with mental illness or addictions say it is more difficult to live with the stigma than it is with the disease or illness itself. Wow, that should grab our attention, Mr. Speaker.

We know that stigma excludes. It isolates. It breathes secrecy. It is a real enemy. If we slay this giant of stigma attached to mental illness, it would certainly be a huge step forward, Mr. Speaker.

I believe we are making progress by talking about it today – and I would like to thank everybody, all stakeholders who brought this forward today. By talking about it today in this House of Assembly, I think we make incremental steps in slaying this giant.

One of the greatest challenges in advancing mental illness and addictions awareness is accepting the fact to eliminate the stigma, finding ways to eliminate the stigma.

The Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council to the Minister of Health and Community Services identified addressing this challenge as its top priority and led the charge to develop a Province-wide, multi-year, anti-stigma social marketing campaign.

In order to gauge the general public's attitudes and beliefs and to confirm existing evidence of stigma toward those with mental illness and addiction, the Department of Health and Community Services commissioned the service of a local research company prior to the start of the development of the campaign.

The research methodology included Province-wide focus groups with individuals and families with lived experience of mental illness and addictions, as well as a Province-wide telephone survey of 600 people over the age of eighteen years. Based on the research findings, Mr. Speaker, it was determined that the most effective approach to changing attitudes regarding mental illness and addiction is to normalize, so to speak, it by bringing awareness to the fact that one in five of us will experience a mental illness or addiction in any given year; that is 20 per cent of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In May of this year we launched Understanding Changes Everything, which aims to challenge and ultimately change the way many people think about mental illness and addiction. I believe we are all learning incrementally about this serious illness. There is a strong effort on everybody's part to understand, to listen, and to demystify this illness. The more we talk about it, we can demystify this illness.

The campaign inspires hope and helps those of us who live with mental illness and addiction toward recovery. Recovery does not mean a cure; however, recovery happens inside of us when we have hope that we can still have a meaningful and a full life, even with the symptoms of an illness.

Recovery begins when the stigma is sort of diminished and when we get all kinds of supports that are available from our friends, families, clergy, counsellors, what have you, Mr. Speaker. Recovery begins when people feel that they are able to make decisions regarding their lives. They take personal responsibility for those decisions and have hope for themselves for the future.

I have to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, we never underestimate the power of hope. Hope is very powerful. It empowers the individual to persevere, to carry on, and to believe that there is light at the end of a dark tunnel. I believe as a society we are providing hope to that individual who feels that they just cannot carry on any more.

The individuals featured in the Understanding Changes Everything campaign inspire hope by

portraying everyday people who, despite living with mental illness and addiction, are leading fulfilling and successful lives. Just like with cancer or diabetes, having a mental illness and/or addiction, it is just one part of a person's life. It does not define who that person really is.

The first phase of this campaign is almost complete and consists of three television commercials, online and cinema advertising, as well as promotion through social media, including Facebook and Twitter. The campaign has been well received by individuals and families with lived experience of mental illness and addiction, community and advocacy groups, and residents throughout the entire Province, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, people have told us how moved they are when they see insightful and powerful ads on television. For some, the ads also elicit a very emotional and a very heartfelt response.

The next phase of the campaign will focus on creating awareness and reducing stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Phase II of this campaign will be launched early in the new year. This campaign is challenging each and every one of us to reflect on how we think and act towards individuals with mental illness and addictions. It all begins with just a little bit more of understanding.

One of the most effective ways to decrease stigma is to take time to listen to someone who has experienced a mental illness or addiction and really hear their story, Mr. Speaker.

Stigma reduction begins when we begin to understand and change how we think, how I think, about the illness. The tag line of our campaign, Understanding Changes Everything, reinforces this sentiment. Residents are encouraged to visit www.understandnow.ca to view these campaign materials, learn about the mental illness and addiction, and find ways to reach out to a family member, a friend, or a co-worker with a mental illness or addiction, reach out for supports. Whether it is by reaching out to a family member, a friend, or a co-worker with a mental illness or addiction, each of us has an important role to play in creating stigma-free communities, stigma-free towns. Remember that understanding changes everything.

I believe everybody in this House, everybody in this Province, without exception, each person can make a difference – how? By simply listening, by supporting, by understanding this complex illness with a very caring heart and an open mind. I believe that this is occurring now and we all try to make improvements to slay this giant that pervades everybody in this society and impacts every single person.

I just want to say thank you to the Minister of Health, thank you to the Premier for their sincere leadership in this issue. There is no question they are out in front of this. I would like to thank the Opposition over here and the Third Party as well, and all the stakeholders right across this Province for their initiative and for their boldness in bringing this issue forward. I really, really thank them because every dialogue, every conversation is one step closer to everybody trying to understand the problems.

I just want to thank the minister for his sincere approach to this. I believe that the best approach is the path we are now on. We just stay the course and I believe we will get the results we all want, and that is to try to deal with the person with mental illness the best that we can, and try to understand one another.

It impacts every single family in some way, shape, or form. As the minister said earlier, everybody in this House is impacted in some way, just like cancer, just like diabetes, just like heart disease, and it poses a severe problem. It will create a lot of stress to families. It even creates a lot of stress for the person going through the illness and disease. It also creates a lot of stress to people who are supporting that person with the disease.

It really has a pervasive impact upon all of us. I just want to encourage everybody on our side of the House – this side of the House, and all the stakeholders involved when we get together, when you have the chance, make proposals or make suggestions.

I want to thank you so much for bringing this forward. I want to thank the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for me to be able to speak to this issue today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to stand today and speak on this important issue. I congratulate the Member for St. John's North in bringing this –

AN HON. MEMBER: Centre.

MR. HILLIER: St. John's Centre.

The Member for St. John's North suggested that I recognize him and I guess I got caught up in it, but it is the Member for St. John's Centre.

I want to welcome the people from Holy Heart. I know that students at Holy Heart in the past months have put together a strong, active group supporting mental illness within the school. I congratulate them on that. I want to talk a little bit about students in my talk and let you know where I was coming from. I was a principal of one of the high schools in St. John's at one point in time.

Mr. Speaker, while mental illness transcends income levels and geographic boundaries, these two factors play a huge role in how accessible treatment comes about. For instance, if one of us or if a public servant is having mental issues, we can avail of our Employee Assistance Program. Early intervention, having someone outside your social circle to talk to; we can do wonders for many people.

If you do not have private health insurance or an EAP, access is limited. Wait times are too high. For many clinicians in the private sector, accessing them is an issue. Mental health care often comes too late, the issues develop into a more severe situation, and by the time help is received it may be too late. Private clinicians can take clients within a week or two, but many people do not have the luxury of easy access to mental health services.

If you do not have access, Mr. Speaker, the question comes: What happens then? When people lack access, they self-medicate. It is no wonder addictions issues are so prevalent when mental health services are lacking. The OxyContin crisis was just one example of the

substance abuse crisis happening here in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, these are my briefing notes, as my colleagues across the way have briefing notes. There are all sorts of statistics involved and examples involved where multi-party committees have been successful. I am sure if we can move in that direction in this House it would be successful here as well.

I wanted to move a little bit away from that today and just talk about and try to put a personal face on some of these people we talk about who, as a result of not having access, begin to self-medicate. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I spent thirty years in a high school in St. John's. I have colleagues with me here in the House today or former teachers who will certainly be able to follow what I am saying with some degree of agreement.

In the last five years of my career in school I was involved in administration. That was about the time of the OxyContin crisis. My background is physical education with a degree in leadership that brought me into administration. I had absolutely no background in counselling. I think I did one course in drugs and behaviour at university as many of us did.

I found myself towards the later stages of my career counselling five or six students who were very much involved in this OxyContin crisis. They were friends, they knew each other, and they knocked around together. Teachers in the classroom at times would have called them lazy, or they would refer to bad behaviour, unmotivated, what are the parents doing, and so on.

For whatever reason, they attached themselves to me. I know my mother would say all you need to do is give somebody a hug. Perhaps that is why they attached themselves to me. We would sit down and talk very frankly about where they were with their addictions, why they had gotten to where they were, and was there anything we could do for them?

I have a couple that I remember. That is seven or eight years ago now, but I remember Bobby. Bobby would come in and sit down with me at recess time. How are you doing today, Bobby?

I am having a good day today, Sir. What do you mean a good day today? No pills yet, Sir. I said, good Bobby. He said, I had a few draws before I came in, but I have not had any pills yet. That is the reality in Bobby's life, trying to sit Bobby down in a classroom and teach him Canadian democracy while he is trying to figure where he is getting his next pill.

Chris would sit down and say, Mr. Hillier, you do not know what this is like. This is Thursday. The seniors got their cheques today. Tonight I am going to get a call from a senior wondering if I want to buy their prescription. He said, you do not know what it is like, quote, to send a girl into a doctor to get a pill for you.

Mr. Speaker, it becomes even worse when one or more of these students you lose. I do not mean they quit school. I mean they overdose. They commit suicide. They die of an eating disorder.

We think in terms of parents having to bury their children, but I know the students at Holy Heart understand what it is like when you lose and have to go through that grieving process for a student. That is the reality for these kids. We try to make this non-political, but if there is money available and the money is not being spent and these kids do not have access, it has to be political.

Mr. Speaker, my son is thirty-one years old; I have a godchild who is also thirty-one. She was born on June 28, 1983; John was born on December 28, 1983. I have pictures of them as infants sitting in the bathtub, sharing a bath. I was best man at their parent's wedding, and we vacationed together. I took my son to our church and they took theirs to their church. She was a great pianist; my son was not. Both of them were involved in sports.

In Grade 7 she started to self-medicate. She has not been in school since Grade 7. She had no access to treatment here in Newfoundland. She went from thirteen to fourteen to fifteen as bad behaviour, lazy, non-motivated. What kind of parents does she have at all? They realized, no, it is bigger than that.

She was sent off to treatment centres on the mainland. You can only understand it I guess

from a parent's view, when you get a call from Edmonton saying that your eighteen-year-old daughter is missing on the streets of Edmonton. So you jump on a plane and you go to Edmonton to try and find your daughter.

In the meantime, and I guess I will let you know who that young lady is now, in the mid-1990s there was a parent with her daughter who became the face of OxyContin addiction here in Newfoundland. We saw her in the court system; she is still in the court system. I have talked to her dad, and her dad talks about driving her downtown and waiting so that she goes to buy a pill and gets back in the truck to come home. That is reality for some of these.

Since then, and I will not talk about her medical issues and so on, but since then she has been diagnosed with mental illness that we did not recognize when she was twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, because she did not have the access. The schools she was at were like the school that I was at. I was the principal trying to do this. I had a guidance counsellor who really did not have the time to be doing this; hence, she was undiagnosed. She has since gone – she has had a child. It is questionable who the father is. The grandparents are raising the child.

Today, my son is a professional with Eastern Health and my godchild is in jail in Clarenville. We will try to put a cost figure on this, I suppose, at some point in time. What would it have cost to provide the access to treatment to this young lady who really should be at this point in time, a young lady raising a family somewhere in Conception Bay South as a young professional working in some department of government, but she is in jail in Clarenville. Where does this end?

We go back to the suicides and so on. I know my friends have said how much longer can this go on? One of these days she may be the next victim, but it all goes back to access. I say again, I wanted to put a personal face on this and you do not want to make it political, but it is political. If there is not access to facilities, if there is not access to professionals, it is an issue of choosing where the money is spent and it is politics that determines where the money is spent, then this is a political issue.

Chris and Bobby are a good news story. I ran into Chris just before Christmas. He is driving a truck for a local building supply store. He says he is doing well and said thank you, Mr. Hillier, for all the time you spent with me. That is a good news case.

Again, I congratulate our colleagues on bringing this motion forward today. The Official Opposition certainly supports it. It is a chance for all parties, it is a chance for members of government, it is a chance for the Official Opposition, and it is a chance for the Third Party to sit down. My colleague across the way talked about slaying the dragon, and it is a dragon. It is a dragon of mental illness. With all parties sitting down, it is an opportunity for everybody to have a closer look at this.

Where do we need to go? Where do facilities need to go? Where does the training for professionals need to go to make sure that people – as I said, like Bobby, Chris, and my godchild – do not have to go through this again?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today is one of those private member's bills that I am sure, in terms of the general breadth of what is being discussed here, we all have some commentary that we can make and we all have some experience that we can bring to the table.

We know, as has been said here many times in the House of Assembly, that one in five of us faces a mental health issue over the course of our lives. So look around, one in five of us here in this House of Assembly, one in five in our families, one in five of our friends, one in five of every situation in which we find ourselves will experience some form of a mental health issue. It is serious. It is something that we certainly need to be tackling. It is something that we certainly need to grapple with.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous, previous portfolio when I was the Minister of Health and Community Services, I attended many federal, provincial, and territorial meetings across this country with some of the brightest minds coming to speak to us at many times. Mental health and addictions would always be one of those areas.

It was always for us one of the most difficult and one of the most emotional discussions that we would have as ministers responsible for this particular area of care of the citizens of our provinces. If we could have found a simple and an easy solution, I think we all would have come right on back to our provinces and we would have implemented those solutions right away.

Mental health and addictions is perhaps the most complex of issues that our professionals deal with. We speak of course of our professionals within the health care system. We speak of our professionals within the education system because all of us who have taught and spent any time in a classroom know as well that dealing with children who present to us every day with mental health issues is very much part of what needs to be happening in a classroom these days. So many of us have had those conversations, have been part of reaching out and trying to offer some help, trying to find the right access, trying to find the right supports.

There is no cookie-cutter answer to any of that, Mr. Speaker. It has to do, though, with being open, it has to do with being aware, and it has to do with the care and compassion that is needed to try to solve this issue. That, I think, we have all seen in many regards in many places, as we have looked at this growing demand that exists for that kind of help and that kind of support.

Mr. Speaker, in this Province today I know that there are thousands of people who are employed specifically to help with mental health and addictions issues, for every aspect of our society. Whether it be the very young – and we are kidding ourselves if we think that this is not an issue for the very young – whether it be for teenagers, middle-age people, seniors, they are issues that every aspect of our society is facing; and so, the thousands of good people who are out there within our systems who are offering

help are every day confronted with another person and another issue.

These are caring, they are compassionate, they are knowledgeable people, and they are working very, very hard to address the issues. I am told that the most common of those disorders and issues that they deal with have to do with anxiety and have to do with depression. Those are the most common, I am told.

Compounding all of those issues, of course, would be the issue of stigma. My colleague spoke of the issue of stigma, of discrimination, and of the kinds of supports that have been put in place to try to deal with it. We can only hope that those supports are going to make a difference because every time we affect one, then we have affected more than that. We have affected a full family of people who have been trying to deal, and so on.

So, I truly believe, and I have had opportunity to see first-hand some of the supports that the Department of Health and Community Services has been working on around eradicating stigma and discrimination for those people who have mental health issues. Maybe we should not say “those people” because it is us. It is all of us. We have just said that; it is one in five. For all of us who are dealing with those particular issues.

I am encouraged when I hear the Minister of Health talk about the consultative process that he is about to embark on for the Province. I think we are going to see good result from that particular process. He is committed to doing what needs to be done, which is making sure that we hear; but we also need to make sure that in hearing, we can listen and then in hearing that we redeploy those thousands of people who I just made reference to in our system so that we are certain that they are able to provide the support where and when it is needed. I think that is a major part of what we are going to learn that we are going to need to do here.

The questions are: Do we need more money? Do we throw more than the \$100 million at this and think that is going to be the answer? Well, I am sure that more money can always be a help, but is it the answer? I suspect it is not; it can be part of the answer. Does it mean that we have

more and more people that we need to employ to reach out? I suspect that can help, but is that the total answer? I am not sure of that either, Mr. Speaker.

So I am looking forward to this consultative process that will help us and looking across the country and, as the minister said, learning from other areas of the country and beyond as to what makes the difference. That, Mr. Speaker, I believe is very, very important to us.

Sometimes people are not aware of the help that is there, because there truly is a fair bit of help that is available in the Province. For anyone who is home and who is watching this right now, perhaps what I should do is just give some examples of the kinds of help that they can avail of at this moment in time and the things that are making a difference.

In Harbour Grace, for example, there will be, very soon, a centre for complex mental health needs for adults in this Province, where people can get individualized help. In Paradise, I know that for young people we now have a centre that is open. It is a state-of-the-art facility that has employed some of the best minds around mental health issues to try to deal one on one with our young people who have mental health problems. I have had the opportunity to tour that facility, to talk with people who are working in that facility, and to see first-hand what a difference that makes.

In my own community, in Grand Falls-Windsor, there is a facility that is a mirror image of the one that is in Paradise, but for people with addictions, where one on one they can be given the help that they need and not have to go out of the Province any more for that help. Those areas, Mr. Speaker, will make great differences I believe in trying to understand and change and meet the need that is out there.

We have various organizations like Choices for Youth that are funded, and we all know of the fabulous help that they provide for many, many people. The Mental Health Crisis Line, which is operational twenty-four seven – and if you are out there now and you are listening and you need help, call that Mental Health Crisis Line. It is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

We have a psychiatric assessment unit as well at Eastern Health that is available to people twenty-four seven. There is a Mobile Crisis Response Team for the St. John's region as well. We also have fifty-nine outpatient counselling offices located throughout the Province. There are three ACT – we call them the ACT Teams – the Assertive Community Treatment Teams in the Province. Again, for those with severe and persistent mental illnesses who require long-term support, these teams are providing sensational help. I have had, again, occasion through my work in the other portfolio to see this work as well.

We have twenty case managers who are working in rural areas. So if you are in a rural area, do not despair and think there is no one for you; there absolutely is. Call your health authority, call the Mental Health Crisis Line, and ask where in your area you can get this help.

There are twenty outreach workers throughout the Province who are engaging with youth at risk as well, Mr. Speaker, to provide support, to provide education. There are approximately seventy psychiatrists, who are working in the Province, and this number has grown over the past ten years and it now meets the benchmark for psychiatrists that have been established nationally. Every regional health authority is offering emergency mental health services and the provincial health line also provides twenty-four seven support and information.

Mr. Speaker, I felt it important to put that out there because, again, as I said, if we can provide hope for just one person this afternoon who sees that, who did not know that this help was available – because the stigma prevents them from asking; the stigma often prevents them from looking for the help that they need. In putting that information out there, I think it is very helpful.

Mr. Speaker, in my role now as Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development I understand very, very clearly that we have a role to play as well, the Department of Education has a role to play, and I am especially encouraged by what I am seeing happening from young people themselves, from our school principals, our teachers, and other faculty members, our

guidance counsellors, our educational psychologists, and so on.

At Holy Heart, just this past November, they had a mental wellness day, a very important day. Workshops were provided for students on mental wellness from yoga instruction to dealing with anxiety and so on, information booths for students. The Premier addressed that particular meeting and from that have grown the idea of looking at a provincial mental health conference that I am very encouraged by, Mr. Speaker – very much encouraged.

Just this last couple of days I learned from the principal at Beachy Cove Elementary school of a forum that the principal and the teachers organized in that particular school to meet the needs of younger students. The principal was able to identify that over a period of time he had dealt with somebody from every single grade level, in one particular day, who presented with a mental health issue; an anxiety issue, a depressive issue, a panic attack. He thought, I need to do something about that.

I really applaud the fact that our principals and our guidance counsellors are showing the leadership that we want to see out there. They are taking it to the next step. They did what we always talk about in education, about saying that it takes a whole village to educate the child. They reached into the community. They asked the community to come together. The community did, of course.

Parents – though some were reluctant at the outset, I was told – came and they were part of that. Other community leaders came and they too were part of that particular forum. He said he sensed the community was now ready to begin the conversation about child and youth mental health issues. He said we frequently get calls about physical illness, but we rarely get calls about mental illness. It is telling. It tells us something again about the stigma, and about that discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, over 150 people came to the forum that was organized by the principal and by the staff of that school. What a benefit that is to all of the children who go to that school. What an example it is to all others to consider getting

involved, because it truly is about the involvement of everybody.

Though I laid out for you here this afternoon a number of different organizations and professionals who are there to help, sometimes it is the touch of a parent that can make the difference. Sometimes it is the touch of a friend that can make the difference. We have to be knowledgeable about all of that, ensuring that all partners come together to make these differences, and see to it that we can be the catalysts in all areas of our communities to eradicate this problem and to deal with this problem, Mr. Speaker. I have seen some great results, yet I know we have so much more to do.

I want to thank the Member for St. John's Centre for bringing this to the floor of the House of Assembly so that we can debate it, and so that we can be a part of sharing and leading the awareness that needs to happen in all of our communities. By communities, I mean in all of our schools, in all of our health settings, and in all of our fraternal organizations, or wherever five people are gathered to make a difference. This truly is the way that we are going to make some progress.

The consultative process that we will engage in will also be very helpful to it, but make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, this is something for every person in Newfoundland and Labrador to get involved in. When those consultations happen, I encourage everyone to come out, to respond, to share, to offer your insight, to offer your story, and to be part of making the difference that we all want to make here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just stand for a few minutes. I just heard the minister speaking very passionately about mental health. I am sure all members in this hon. House are concerned about everybody and people with mental health issues. I agree with

the minister. With all the services that are available out there we need to reach out. We, as parliamentarians, need to put in place more structures for people who need these services.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say upfront that I support this motion. I will vote for this motion. Anything we can do to support mental health, make it aware, bring it around the Province, and set up a group of parliamentarians to hold public consultations, hear the issues, and see what we could bring forward to this Legislature, that is what we should be doing.

Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of comments here today. I know my colleague spoke very passionately about this issue. I know the Member for St. John's Centre spoke very passionately, the Minister of Health, the member for Grand Falls spoke very passionately and also the Minister of Education.

I am just going to have a few words on it, Mr. Speaker. Back in my prior day I worked with the Department of Social Services for a while. I am going back to 1985, Xavier House. I know the Member for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Humber West.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Humber West. It is in his district. Back in 1985, Mr. Speaker, there was a need in Corner Brook. I was lucky enough to be working with the Department of Social Services. I was one of the people who helped set up Xavier House in Corner Brook and get it moving, realizing that there was a need for housing for people. That was a long time ago. There are still needs coming forth now.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we do need are – and I know the minister just mentioned it also – a lot more professionals, psychiatrists and counsellors available. I am definitely not here today to stand up and try to throw any bricks at anybody. Everybody in this Legislature, I am very confident, will do the best that they can do to help out this issue. I am confident. Maybe we may have a different approach. I just happen to think that this motion here on the table today is a different approach so that we can all, as parliamentarians, come up with some suggestions to bring forth to the House.

I just want to give an example, Mr. Speaker, and this has nothing to do with mental health. I was on a few committees before. The FPI Act – we travelled around the Province. We came back and made recommendations to the House. That is what this is all about today, what we as a group can do to bring here so that we can help strengthen the Legislature and strengthen the Department of Health so that we can help the people who are most vulnerable out in our society.

Mr. Speaker, I know everybody heard this before, what if you broke your leg? It is not a big deal. Let's go get it fixed. Everybody has a laugh and signs the cast. The minute you have a mental issue, the minute depression sinks in, what do we do? All of a sudden there is the stigma, we have to step back. It is sad. This is part of the education. We have come a long way. When we were all young we would see someone with a broken arm, we would sign their cast. If someone has a bit of depression what do we do? They are over in the corner.

Thank God, Mr. Speaker, that everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is becoming more educated. They have become more educated. We are becoming more educated, but we cannot give up the fight. We definitely cannot give up the fight because this issue is ongoing.

I heard the Minister of Education and the points she brought up, Mr. Speaker. I know personally it affects families as a whole. When you look at someone with a mental health issue through depression, through anxiety, it is just not that person. If it is a mother, it is the whole family. If it is the father, it is the whole family. If it is a brother, it is the whole family. If it is someone who is working, it is someone in the whole workplace. As the Minister of Education rightly pointed out, this has more implications than just one person. It is a whole family issue. It becomes a society issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to criticize, I am just here to bring these issues forth. One of the issues out on the West Coast – services are one big thing – is housing. That is one big thing. If you speak to the mental health advocates out on the West Coast, one of the things that are lacking for people with these types of

unfortunate circumstances is housing, a place to go. Sometimes they will need supervision, just like Xavier House. I know the Member for Humber West was there many times. We do not have enough housing for people with mental disabilities out on the West Coast, and I am sure all around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we also need a lot more services. Now how those services are going to be provided is up for debate, but we definitely need the services. I refer back again to the Minister of Education. Is it money? There has been a lot of money spent on mental health. It definitely has. Is it spent the right way? That is the debate we should have.

That is why we need – again, this motion, as a committee we can hear from professionals. I am sure the Minister of Health, and I am sure the former Minister of Health has heard from professionals, but it is for parliamentarians to hear from professionals instead of having me standing up here as a Member for Bay of Islands. You have to have a professional out in front of me saying: here is what you need; here is the approach we should take. I think that is what we can do with this committee, Mr. Speaker.

I always said it, Mr. Speaker, with depression and anxiety, it creeps up on you. It just creeps up. A lot of times we may know someone becoming withdrawn. Mr. Speaker, I was a counsellor in my former days also, so I seen that on a first-hand basis. I saw depression on a first-hand basis. I saw the anxiety.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you when someone gets into a mental illness of anxiety or depression, you need professional help. What we need to do is provide that professional help all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why we need professionals to tell us where it should be, what type of services.

Again, I am sure we see a lot of places around where there are a lack of professionals, and I do not think for one minute – and I am not saying this and I want to make it clear – that anybody on the opposite side are trying to recruit professionals for mental health issues in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I feel

everybody here would do whatever they can, but we need to see if there is any way we can improve on that and bring in new ideas. See if there is some way that we, as a group, can say: okay, here are some recommendations we got from frontline professionals that we could bring into the Legislature that we can incorporate into the Department of Health.

I heard the minister speaking. Again, I know first-hand in schools there are a lot of mental health issues with younger people these days, a lot of mental health issues. Mr. Speaker, if you speak to any professional in the schools, which I have, if you do not find the problem and try to help solve the problem when they are young, it is just going to grow and grow and grow into teenagers and into adults. It is a serious problem in our schools.

We have a lot of professional, caring people who are working in the system, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot. I know a lot of them personally out on the West Coast. I know the Member for Humber West also, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GRANTER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: No, I will tell you what I was thinking. I was thinking about you as the principal of the school. I know because I dealt with the minister personally on some issues at the school when he was principal. I am very confident that he is well aware of some of the issues. He is aware, if not well aware. I know he is aware of the issues in the school.

Mr. Speaker, we have to find some way to provide services in the schools, to the elementary schools, to the junior high, to the senior high schools. I am very confident that if we work at this together – we are not going to solve all of these problems. We are not going to solve all of the mental health issues in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador overnight, but if we can make a difference, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it is well worth it.

I will take my seat now, Mr. Speaker. I want to say I support this private member's motion that was put in. I will gladly stand and vote for this private member's motion, because I have been around this Legislature for many years.

I did participate in sessions where parliamentary committees went out and brought back valuable information to the House of Assembly. I think this is what this whole process is going to do. This is what this process is meant to do, Mr. Speaker, is get professionals, not people in this Legislature who are saying, what do you think? We are asking for professionals, to go out and meet with professionals, get some recommendations, get some input. That is what our role is. That is what we should be doing because I can assure you, together we can make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to give notice of motion under Standing Order 11. The House of Assembly will not adjourn tomorrow, Thursday, at 5:30 p.m., and further will not adjourn tomorrow, Thursday, at 10:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Further speakers?

If the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre speaks now she will close debate.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, sometimes the answer should simply be yes. Imagine if today every member in this House stood up and said yes to this motion before the floor. This would no longer be a private member's motion, this would no longer be a motion just for my caucus; this would be a motion from the whole House of Assembly.

Every speaker today stood up and talked about the complex issues of mental health and addictions. Every speaker stood up and talked about how complex the solutions are, and everybody in this House stood up and spoke

about how much they care and how passionate they are about it.

I believe every speaker who stood up in this House and spoke in that manner, but imagine if we all stood up today and said yes, we will work together, because that is what this motion is calling for. This motion is not calling for to take power from anyone. This motion is not calling to trick anyone. This motion is not calling to put anyone down. This motion is saying: Can we all, as people elected on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, work together?

This motion is about hope. This motion is about respect. This motion is about the future. This motion is about battling the cynical notion out there about what politics is, about what our Legislature is about. This motion is about daring to dream that we can do the work of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what it is about. It is not to take power away from government. It is not to take power away from anybody else.

Imagine if we all said yes and worked together, because that is what the motion is calling for. Again, I remind the members of the tweet that Amelia Curran posted before we started our debate: I am waiting on pins and needles to hear about today's petition that is put before the House of Assembly."

There are a number of people waiting on pins and needles, because this motion is on behalf of the thousands of people who suffer from mental health issues and addictions issues; their families, their friends, their communities, people who work in this area, people who work for Eastern Health, who work for the regional health authorities, people who work in community groups, who work for suicide prevention, people who organized days in their schools, students who have organized days in their schools. Do you know how they did that? They did that by working together. That is what this motion is calling for.

This motion is calling for the best. It is calling for the best out of this House. It is calling for us to dare to work together, to bring together the energy and the resources from every caucus in this House. If I am appointed by my caucus on such a committee, I will be bringing the energy,

the expertise in the community, and the commitment of every member of my caucus. Therefore, I will also be bringing the voices that are represented by every member of my caucus. That is what we are asking for.

What in God's name could be the reason to not? What in God's name would be the reason to not say yes to this motion? Would it be pride? Would it be paranoia? I do not know. There is no good reason not to say yes. Sometimes the answer simply should be yes so that we can proceed and we can work together.

Everybody who spoke today talked about the growing problem. We all talked about the financial situation that we find ourselves in. That proves a certain difficulty with a lot of challenges, a growing problem with diminishing resources. How do we ensure that we do it the best way we possibly can?

I was told the other day that we have the highest number of public sector workers using the EAP right now. We have the highest number of public sector workers who are going for help because of anxiety and depression. Some of them are still feeling the effects of cutbacks in the past few Budgets. We have a growing problem.

We also know that there is a growing problem of anxiety among young people. The students who organized their mental health day at Holy Heart, they realized that, and what did they do? They worked together. Students, counsellors, teachers, community activists, and community support groups, they all worked together. They will continue to work together to come up with solutions.

This motion comes from and reflects the desires and the asks from experts around the Province. It is not simply my motion. It comes from people who have worked in the area for years. It comes from some of our public sector workers, from some of our health care workers, from teachers and counsellors, from students, from seniors, from voluntary groups, from individuals. It comes from people who have lived experience. There are a number of people behind this motion. They have the expertise. Why in God's name would we say no to their expertise? There is no good reason to say no.

There is absolutely no good reason to say no. Why would the Minister of Health say he can do it better on his own without us all collaborating and working together?

Can you imagine if we all stood up and said yes to this motion today? What we would be doing is we would be rolling up our sleeves as we walked outside this door, as we walked outside this House, we would be patting each other on the back and saying well, that was great; we can do this together. We would be rolling up our sleeves saying let's get at it. Because that is what we have to do; we have to get at it. This involves people's lives.

Every one of us in this House has a story to tell similar to our colleague from the Official Opposition. I have a family member who is twenty-one years old who started self-medicating with OxyContin in the school yard, thirteen years old. Put in jail at nineteen, rotting in a prison without programs. We all have those stories. We all have the stories to tell.

I did not tell many stories today because what I want to do is I want to focus on the possibility of us working together to make it better, because we all do know the stories. We have lived them. We have witnessed them. We know, because we have to have hope and we have to have to resilience, we know that we can all work together to make this better.

I do not know how anybody who does not support this, who does not support this motion, how you will speak to the people that you represent and say why you did not support this motion, why you would not support all of us working together with a common goal to make it better.

The thing about a select committee is that it allows us to look at all aspects of our government and our services through the lens of mental health. We can look at our Department of Health and Community Services. We can look at our Department of Justice. A psychiatrist, Howard Sapers, said that our prisons have become our new asylums. That is what we are dealing with. So, with an all-party select committee, we can ask for expert testimony from our Justice department and from people who work in that area.

We have to look at housing. A psychiatrist I consulted with said: I cannot help my people get well if they do not have a safe place to live. He said: There is no way they can get well if they do not have a good place to live, a safe place to live. We know that poverty and housing are among some of the chief social determinants of health, the chief social determinants of mental health. We have to look at poverty.

We have to look at seniors. We have a growing population of seniors. Our seniors are the most overmedicated and are falling into depression. We have to look at youth at risk. We have to look at our children. Our children, particularly in rural Newfoundland, who have to wait up to a year to two years to see a child pediatric psychiatrist, unless they end up in the emergency at the Janeway.

We have to look at our whole health care system. We know in rural Newfoundland that family physicians are dealing with mental health problems because the supports and the resources are not out there. They are carrying the load. We have to look at our education system: Holy Heart of Mary, over 1,000 students, and two counsellors and the counsellors are talking about the growing incidents of anxiety and depression among students.

The Minister of Education spoke this evening that mental health issues and addictions issues are the most complex problems we face and have the most complex solutions. She is right, and so we have to bring everything to bear in order to be able to come up with solutions that are effective.

I want to thank my colleagues; I want to thank everybody who spoke today. Not only do I want to thank all those who spoke, I also want to thank those who have listened because, particularly in this area, we have to listen with the real intent to hear, and that was our challenge today. It is my hope that everyone in this House has really heard what has been put forward today because, again, what has been put forward is not only my voice or only the voice of those who have stood in the House, but the voice of many people across the Province.

Again, why would we not use every tool available to us? In 2010, Ontario had a Select

Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I have their final report here. Mr. Speaker, with leave, I would just like to read three lines from their final report from the committee. It is a very extensive and comprehensive procedure that they went through.

One paragraph that the committee wrote in their final report – and it was a letter from the members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It was a select committee with members from each party, “Each of the province’s three political parties was represented on the Committee by Members who volunteered to serve because of our personal commitment to people living with a mental illness or addiction. Regardless of our political convictions, we recognized that we must do better. All Ontarians must get the mental health and addictions care they deserve. We worked cooperatively throughout our entire mandate, and we hope that this spirit of collegiality will influence those who must now implement our recommendations.”

Mr. Speaker, that is what we are calling for here today: the possibility of us all working together with respect, with the spirit of collegiality so that we can influence altogether – that we can influence how we will go forward in addressing the very, very complex issues of mental health and addictions services in our Province.

I would like to point out that the Premier in his leadership bid for his party talked about modernizing our Legislature and using the MHAs more effectively. Also the Minister of Health said in his platform for his leadership race, “I will form an all-party committee to guide the Open Government Initiative from action plan to fruition.” That is what we are calling for. We are asking him to do the same thing on the issues of mental health.

Mr. Speaker, I want to again thank this House for the opportunity for presenting this motion. I would like to thank my colleagues who all spoke and who all listened with the intent to truly hear. I would like to finish one more time with my colleague from the very end of the line there, from St. Barbe, who said to me: Sometimes the answer simply should be yes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, standing on a point of order.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on a point of order. I realize I have had an opportunity to participate in the debate today, and I assure members opposite and all members of the House that I have listened carefully and I am sincere in saying that this issue, mental health is my number one priority as the Health Minister.

The Premier has followed the debate carefully today. I know colleagues on all sides of the House have followed it closely and we need to make the system better. I think we can do it by working together.

I have followed the debate closely today, I have listened to what people have had to say, and I am prepared to modify the process that I was proposing to accommodate some of the wishes and desires that have been expressed here today. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I intend to support the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, 1:30 p.m.