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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Members representing the Districts of Port de Grave, Labrador West, Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, Bay of Islands, St. John's East, and Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to a true icon in the community of Port de Grave, Aunt Greta Hussey. She was a wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother who became an author, poet, and local historian.

In the fall of 2011, at the age of eighty-nine she re-released her book, *Our Life on Lear's Room, Labrador*. I was present that evening and remember vividly listening to her read from her book in her strong clear voice. It brought chills to many in the room, and you too can enjoy the occasion by listening to her on YouTube. I invite all members to meet Aunt Greta through technology.

I have many fond memories of visiting with her and our great chats. Like most women of her generation, Aunt Greta was an exceptional cook. I recall one visit when she was upset because she burnt the brewis in the frying pan. Well, let me tell you, I ate the brewis.

She provided specific instructions for her service last week. One of those was we will read her in and we will sing her out. Yes, Mr. Speaker, she also provided for a mug-up.

I ask all hon. members to extend their sympathies to her sons: Edwin, Guy, Rex, Paul, and daughter Maxine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand in this hon. House today to congratulate the Royal Canadian Legion Branches 47 and 57 in Labrador West on another successful Legion Radio Telethon. The legions in Labrador West are very active in the communities of Labrador City and Wabush, and each year they host a radio telethon to raise funding for special equipment for the local hospital. This is the thirtieth anniversary for the telethon.

Even with the difficult economic times in Labrador West this year, the local residents and businesses were very supportive of the legions. Co-Chairperson Bernie Denief set a goal of raising \$25,000 and this year they were very successful in surpassing all expectations by raising \$44,000. This money will go towards the purchase of a new cardiograph cart machine with a sixteen lead, able to do more diagnostic work than the current twelve-lead machine.

It takes a lot of volunteers to make this event successful and the large number of volunteers have provided entertainment, transportation, and runner service to collect the donations was incredible.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Branches 47 and 57 of the Royal Canadian Legion on another successful event.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I pay tribute today to a remarkable woman, who died one month ago today. Dr. Becky Sjare joined the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in 1993, and it was in her capacity as an outstanding Arctic scientist that I had the pleasure of encountering her as part of my work

with the Voisey's Bay environment review panel – but, it was probably for her untiring work as an athletic coach and volunteer that she is best known in the community and will be most fondly remembered.

I am happy to recognize her in the name of the wonderful community that she was such a vital part of. On a Facebook page created in Becky's memory, friends and fellow athletes talked with affection and love about the time and energy she invested in them, of her willingness to be at the track seven days a week in all sorts of weather, and of how her enthusiasm, dedication, and unwavering faith meant so much.

She was coach, co-ordinator and official in provincial Summer Games, and on the Canada Games team coaching staff. She was on the provincial executive board and a coach with Pearlgate since 2006.

I ask all hon. members to join me in saluting Dr. Becky Sjare, scientist and volunteer par excellence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Meadows Recreation Committee and its President, Jamie Brake.

On Sunday, March 1, I attended the kickoff of the thirty-seventh annual winter carnival and the official opening of the new Meadows Sports Complex. This facility speaks volumes to the many volunteers in the town. While the initial funding was obtained through a Capital Works grant program to do the ground work, the support and commitment that the town, the recreation committee, and volunteers have put in to get the facility where it is today is second to none.

The first Pond Hockey Championship was held on February 7 and 8 with thirteen teams throughout the Bay of Islands, Corner Brook, and areas throughout, participating in the event. While many people were involved in this project, it was Jamie Brake's determination and

commitment to have a safe, affordable sports facility for the residents, that the town's new sports complex is a reality and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

I ask all members to join me in extending congratulations to Jamie and the recreation committee, the Town of Meadows, the Member for Gander for his support, and the many volunteers who came together to make this facility a reality and exemplify what true community spirit is all about.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, as MHAs, we attend many events in our districts. One of the most moving annual events for me is the Holocaust Memorial service presented every year by the Jewish Community Havura of St. John's.

At this year's service, held April 12 at the MUN Harris Centre, six candles were lit to remember six million Jews who perished in Nazi concentration camps between 1933 and 1945. A seventh candle was lit in remembrance of social democrats, the disabled, the gypsies, teachers, legislators, and political opponents of Nazi Germany who also perished.

Actor and playwright Lisa Hurd shared her own family's story. Lisa related her story about her own escape from occupation and a certain death; the audience, Mr. Speaker, was captivated.

Almost 200 people gathered to remember so the world never forgets. The victims of the Nazis died in places well known in our history: Treblinka, Sobibor, Bergen-Belsen, Belchec, Birkenau, Auschwitz, and more. Some families here in Newfoundland and Labrador were also touched by the fact that they also lost family members in the Shoah.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to commend the Havura for their commitment to keeping these events in our collective memory,

to help us as MHAs remember, so the world does not forget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the outstanding public speaking abilities of our youth in the Coast of Bays region who have participated in the annual Lions Club regional Speak Out hosted by the Harbour Breton Lions.

The first place winner for 2015 was Sommer McDonald of John Watkins Academy in Hermitage-Sandyville. Second place went to Tammy Snook of King Academy in Harbour Breton, and third place was captured by Julie Young of Bay d'Espoir Academy, in Milltown, Head of Bay d'Espoir.

I would also like to thank the Lions Club, teachers, parents, judges, and volunteers who assist the youth in so many ways as they research and prepare for the speak out. This event provides an excellent opportunity for young people to develop their oratory talent and skills.

The tremendous effort they put into researching and highlighting relevant and important issues of their generation will certainly show them that they do have the skills and abilities to make a positive difference in their own lives and the lives of others.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in delivering accolades to these fine young ladies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize that today, April 28, is National Day of Mourning. On this occasion we remember workers who have been killed, injured, or suffered illness due to workplace related hazards and incidents.

I had the honour of participating in a wreath-laying ceremony today here at Confederation Building with my colleagues, joining over 100 people who laid a wreath in memory of loved ones or co-workers. I want to take this opportunity to thank the St. John's and District Labour Council for organizing this event.

Mr. Speaker, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission recently reported that the number of workplace injuries resulting in lost-time compensation claims has remained, for the third consecutive year, at the lowest level ever recorded in our Province. Nevertheless, in 2014, eleven workers died as a result of workplace accidents, and eighteen from occupational disease. These statistics highlight the need to continue promoting a strong safety culture at work and at home.

Mr. Speaker, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission collaborates with the Occupational Health and Safety Branch of Service NL to enhance safety in all types of workplaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Last year, over 12,800 directives were issued to identify and correct unsafe work practices, and more than 4,800 inspections were carried out across the Province. This work benefits employees throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and their families, and continues to be a foremost priority for our government.

Mr. Speaker, this day is an important reminder for all of us to be vigilant so we can all go home safe at the end of the work day. Our government has proudly partnered with employers, employees, and labour groups to reduce workplace injuries and deaths, and we are committed to building an even stronger culture of safety for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I want to thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement, Mr. Speaker, and thank you and thanks to the St. John's and District Labour Council for organizing today's event.

It was moving to see so many different groups and associations that actually participated in the lobby for the Confederation Building today. I am certainly honoured to stand here and observe the National Day of Mourning. The Member for Mount South and I attended today's ceremony where we laid a wreath in memory of the workers who suffered injury and illness, or have lost their lives as a result of a workplace incident.

The Premier also mentioned the eleven workers who died as a result of workplace accidents and the eighteen from occupational disease. We must also remember on this day those who are not counted in those numbers because not all workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths are reported as such.

On the National Day of Mourning I will reiterate the need to address the backlog of appeals with the workplace health, safety and compensation review commission. I would also like to point out the lack of movement on implementing the recommendations of the workplace health and safety commission statutory review. On this day of mourning, we must reflect on the lives affected and lost.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement. The fact that eighteen of twenty-nine worker fatalities this year were due to occupational disease is the legacy of workplace

health hazards in this Province – some of which still exist. Firefighters risk contracting cancers from the dangerous chemicals they must work with. Mine workers in Labrador West continually watch out for high levels of silica dust that causes pneumoconiosis. Former Baie Verte miners and Marystown shipyard workers continue to get sick and die because of cancers developed linked to asbestos.

I point out to the Premier that these groups of workers and former workers need proper coverage and compensation for the diseases their job has exposed them too.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to recognize April 26 to May 2 as National Immunization Awareness Week. National Immunization Awareness Week provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the value of being immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Immunization is a key component of public health and goes a long way toward protecting us from communicable diseases. By getting our children started with first vaccinations at two months of age, we immediately protect them from eleven different diseases and place them on a path of prevention that continues throughout their school years and into adulthood. Getting vaccinated not only prevents us and our children from getting sick; it also reduces the risk to those with less protection, such as infants or those with chronic diseases.

Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to protecting public health in Newfoundland and Labrador. This past year we expanded the provincial vaccination program through an investment of \$350,000. These funds

increased access to influenza vaccines for all residents of the Province, whooping cough vaccines for adults, and added a second dose of chicken pox vaccine for children.

I would also like to call attention to the recent report by the CD Howe Institute that praises our Province as a national leader in vaccination rates. The report highlights what it calls Newfoundland and Labrador's "take-every-opportunity" approach to immunization as a key factor in our success with vaccination uptake. The national average for vaccination rates falls between 70 per cent and 95 per cent. I am proud to say that the report has placed Newfoundland and Labrador at the peak of the national average with a vaccination rate of 95 per cent for childhood vaccinations.

We are tremendously proud of our provincial status as a national leader in vaccination rates; however, we must remain vigilant in disease prevention and safety. I would also like to take this opportunity to alleviate some concern expressed in our communities after a study falsely linked the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine with the development of autism. That study has since been debunked by a large US study involving 95,000 children. Parents can have confidence in vaccinating their infants against these childhood diseases.

Mr. Speaker, as always, anyone seeking information about vaccinations – or the many myths associated with them – is encouraged to visit our departmental website at www.gov.nl.ca/health. We will continue our commitment to protecting the health and well-being of everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Immunizations are a very important part of public health. I am pleased to see that we are a national leader in vaccination rates.

With respect to specific diseases, we know that HPV infections are the most common sexually transmitted infection. Right now, the publicly funded HPV vaccine is only offered to girls in our Province. Boys can be vaccinated but only if their parent or guardian chooses to pay out of pocket.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends boys be vaccinated. The Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Medical Association believes that anything that makes it easier or more accessible for boys would be a win. Alberta and PEI already vaccinate boys.

Vaccinating boys would further prevent the spread of the most commonly spread sexually transmitted disease, would reduce the risk of developing cancer in both males and females, it sends the message that both girls and boys are responsible for sexual health, not just girls, and it provides for gender equity.

Government should seriously be looking at this initiative, and we strongly encourage parents to get their children immunized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. The government should be proud that the Province has a 95 per cent immunization rate and thank the public health workers who provide this service. It is incredibly important to continue, to educate, and encourage vaccination. Over the last fifty years, immunization has saved more lives than any other health measure. We can forget just how fast and deadly these diseases can be.

I would like to mention Dr. Bruce Aylward from this Province who is fighting to rid the world of polio – a preventable, highly infectious virus that mainly affects children, some of whom are left paralyzed or who die. We no longer have it

in this country, but it still remains deadly in others. Dr. Aylward believes the fight is more than just about polio, and I quote him: “It’s about equity. It’s about social justice and making sure every kid’s got a better shot at a better future.”

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government determined that a comprehensive review of the *Lands Act* and service delivery model was required. This review will ensure the legislation is still relevant and service delivery model is the most effective way to manage, administer, utilize, and protect our Crown lands for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We wanted to be assured that the process would be independent; therefore, we established a review committee of three individuals from outside government who are educated, experienced and knowledgeable in the areas of law, policy, and business process review.

An advisory committee was also established to support the review committee by providing input and information sharing throughout the process.

In order to provide an opportunity for all residents and stakeholders to provide input, the methods utilized included: written submissions, online submissions, feedback via telephone, or by attending a consultation session.

Mr. Speaker, eight consultation sessions took place throughout the Province. Public consultation sessions began on March 19 and continued through to April 7 in St. John’s, Marystown, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Breton, Corner Brook, St. Anthony, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Labrador City.

The turnout at the sessions were significant with over 170 participants attending including

residents and individuals representing a variety of industries such as agriculture, tourism, municipal government, as well as the business community. The department also received approximately twenty-eight written submissions and eighteen online submissions.

In the coming weeks, a “What We Heard” document will be released on the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs website.

Mr. Speaker, now that the consultations have concluded, the review committee will begin to prepare a final report. It is anticipated that report will be completed in June and I look forward to receiving and reviewing the recommendations contained within that report.

The provincial government is committed to its focus on listening, collaborating, and innovation. This review demonstrates this and will lead to practical and informed recommendations to ensure the *Lands Act* aligns with best practices to better meet the needs of residents and stakeholders alike.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy. I thank the individuals for carrying out the report. I have a few comments to make about it. I guess one positive is that we might be able to finally see the report by Don Downer – the land use advisory committee which cost the government \$750,000, and the price is still climbing. That was five years ago. We are still waiting for that report.

I would say to the minister it is great to have a report done. I know the minister is working on this but the Minister of Service NL – Coppermine Brook, people with leased land by government following every law cannot get hooked up to electricity. They cannot even get a letter returned by the Minister of Service NL; everything is put on freeze.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Do you know why they put it on freeze? There may be a problem with the sewer. They were supposed to have it done two years ago. Admit it in front of seventy-five people – the assessment is not even done.

The Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, thank you for trying to solve this problem. The Minister of Service NL, do your duty and respond to these responsible people who need an answer.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: They have been trying to get an answer for two years.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the minister his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that government will act on what I heard, particularly at the session at the Capital Hotel. It was an interesting session.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from landowners talking about ignoring the existing legislated fifteen-metre buffer zone, trying to prevent people from walking on shoreline trails. We heard about the protection of green spaces and nature trails, and municipal access to Crown lands, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, the big thing that I heard up there amongst the group, the table where I was, was about enforcement. Government has for a long time had a problem with enforcing most of the breaches of the Lands Act as it is now. I would like to ask the minister: Where is he going to get the resources to ensure enforcement of the other measures?

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier announced this morning that he will privatize four long-term care facilities in our Province; however, he did not mention what the cost to seniors requiring this care would be. He did say, however, that private operators would determine the cost. Currently, these costs are set by government.

So I ask the Premier: Why are you allowing private operators to determine how much seniors will pay for long-term care in our Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite and members of the House, that I was very pleased and proud this morning to stand with colleagues from the House of Assembly, and a large room of seniors representing various groups and organizations from Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and announce this morning that we are going to invest in the future of our seniors, invest in the future of our people by partnering with private business and not-for-profits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We are going to build long-term care homes through partnerships in Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: We are going to build them in Central, in Grand Falls-Windsor. We are going to build one in Gander, and we are going

to build right here on the Northeast Avalon, Mr. Speaker. That is bold decisions. That is taking big steps as a government. That is finding a way to service the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who deserve to have good service from their government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I thought the Premier said this morning that the investment was going to come from private operators, not from this government.

Will you please tell the seniors of this Province: Why would you let private operators determine the cost of long-term care? What is that cost?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we sought out new ways of doing business, Mr. Speaker, we found out better ways, and we sought out better ways to provide services to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We dug down deep, and we looked across Canada, and we looked to our friends in Nova Scotia –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – we looked to our friends in New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker, and we found that partnerships are working in other provinces in Canada. They are working in Ontario, they are working in British Columbia, they are working in the Maritimes, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and it is a good way to move forward.

There is no difference in the cost to the people who are going to need these services, but we are going to provide it. In doing so, we are going to alleviate some of the congestions, some of the backlogs that we see in our acute care hospitals as well. It is a win-win-win, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I would like to remind the Premier that the media event is now over. People want details.

How much, and why are you allowing private operators to control those costs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I said this morning that we are going to go through a competitive process, and we are going to allow private entities and not-for-profit entities to participate in that process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: They can enter into the process, Mr. Speaker. We will go through with assistance from Partnerships BC, a Crown corporation in British Columbia that has a wealth of experience and knowledge and a wealth of success in providing long-term care through partnerships.

If he wants details, I will give him details, Mr. Speaker. In March month of this year there was 237 patients in acute care hospital beds; \$50,000 a month acute care hospital beds that were waiting for long-term care. The result of that, Mr. Speaker, was that surgeries were backed up and cancelled. People in emergency rooms never had a room to go. We are taking steps to fix our health care system and provide the best services possible for (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind the Premier of one step he did not take, and that is put the long-term care site in Corner Brook which would have been 120 beds. That would have reduced the number of 237 that he just mentioned, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: The Premier says that it will be more cost effective for government but he did not provide any cost estimate or any real details this morning.

I ask the Premier: What savings do you anticipate from this move to privatize long-term care?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Surely goodness the member opposite is familiar with competitive processes and where it is very difficult for us as a government to prejudge and try and anticipate exactly what private operators, not-for-profit groups are going to submit as proposals to participate in this process, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: We looked across the country, and we know that when we deal – we have a long-term care facility in this Province which is privately operated and privately owned, and we are paying a per month fee, Mr. Speaker. Guess what? The cost for long-term care beds with that private operator is lower than we can provide right in publicly operated systems. The same thing has happened in other provinces, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing today is not a lot different than the huge number of personal care homes we have around the Province. The Leader of the Opposition owns one, Mr. Speaker, he should know all about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier seems to have a lot of background done on the cost savings. Why doesn't he just tell the people of the Province, how much do you anticipate saving?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the benefits to the member opposite and I will tell it to the people of the House here. We are going through a competitive process, and until not-for-profits and businesses submit their bids, we will not know; but we do know that in Newfoundland and Labrador partnering is a lower cost.

We know in Nova Scotia, they can provide services in partnering at a lower cost. New Brunswick, they provide at a lower cost, Mr. Speaker, and in BC lower costs. The examples are numerous, Mr. Speaker. The examples are numerous right through Canada, right across Canada that there have been savings. In some places it has been 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: What we are going to do, Mr. Speaker – here are the big savings. We do not have to pay to build these buildings. We do not have to pay the capital cost upfront, hundreds of millions of dollars that we are saving for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government has engaged, as the Premier just said, with a Crown corporation from British Columbia to help facilitate this process.

Was this company selected through an open RFP process? What is the value of that contract with this government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is rather loud in here this afternoon. I am glad everybody is as excited as I am about this announcement (inaudible) Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: We extensively searched for a partner that had the expertise to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection.

We searched extensively for a partner that had the expertise we required to venture into this new area. We looked across the country and we found that the best possible solution was entering into a partnership with a Crown corporation in British Columbia that has worked with multiple provinces and territories on large procurement and infrastructure projects.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I am very excited about this opportunity with Partnerships BC. We are looking forward to continuing to do business with them in the months ahead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will ask the Minister of Health and Community Services, the Premier did not answer this: Was this an open process? What was the cost of this RFP?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, after a great deal of research and a great deal of consideration I can tell the member opposite that Partnerships BC was the only organization in the country that we were prepared to enter into a partnership with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: We feel that they have significant experience and expertise, not only in delivering projects on behalf of the people of British Columbia, but they have partnered with Ontario, they have provided support in Alberta. They have done projects just like this in Saskatchewan and Yukon. They have extensive experience across the country that we will benefit from.

We are entering into a short-term contract to acquire that expertise. The details are still being negotiated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: We anticipate that the full cost over the life of the entire project –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well there is another deal, another negotiation that they do not have completed. Are you telling me that the Minister of Health and Community Services, the Premier, and the Minister of Finance has entered into an RFP with a BC company and they do not know how much it is going to cost this government, going to cost the taxpayers of this Province.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition has it wrong because he is saying over there we entered into an RFP with Partnerships BC. What we have done is we looked for who is best able to lead us. We talked to other provinces.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: We talked to other jurisdictions. We were quite pleased when we talked the Government of British Columbia and their Crown corporation in Partnerships BC who has extensive experience.

We anticipate right now, I can tell you, that their involvement and their assistance providing to us – because here in Newfoundland and Labrador we do not have the expertise. We do not have the background. We do not have the experience in doing these types of partnerships.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: The contract with them will cost roughly about \$600,000, but I can tell you the people of BC are quite happy to have Partnerships BC. The Liberal government of BC are quite happy to have Partnerships BC. We are quite happy to work with them too, 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 many companies within our own Province that are able to do this work with providing long-term care services.

Will the RFP with this BC company provide a provincial preference for Newfoundland and Labrador companies?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, with Partnerships BC, who has tremendous experience in these types of partnerships, the first step is they are going to do a sounding. They are going to do a sounding throughout the country and here in Newfoundland and Labrador so that businesses that have an interest in participating in the process can have discussions with Partnerships BC so they can understand the lay of the land. So Partnerships BC could understand the lay of the land in Newfoundland and Labrador, they can understand the interest, who is interested in it, what companies can understand what Partnerships BC is going to do.

The first step is the sounding, Mr. Speaker. It is probably going to start –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: It is probably going to start as early as Friday of this week, but it will be in full go in the next week or so and we look forward to the response. We also look forward to the report from Partnerships BC on the first stage of this process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, maybe they should get the Crown corporation from BC to start looking after some ferries in Labrador too, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Using private corporations in private partnerships for constructing facilities is one thing, but allowing them to control the level of service and cost is concerning. This makes seniors worry about the cost of care that they will need. Currently, government controls the level of service in long-term care facilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: I ask the Premier: How do you plan to control the level of services in this new private model?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Good question, Mr. Speaker. We are going to rely again and work together with partnerships, like Partnerships BC, and we are working through the process to ensure that cost is consistent. Because we are talking about a long-term contract. We are talking a contract that is going to be like twenty to thirty years in length so that we have sustainability in long-term care, so we know where those long-term care beds are going to be, Mr. Speaker. We know what availability is going to be.

We know that the demand is growing, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that we have long-term care beds available for the aging population of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are fastest aging population of the Province. We have to find innovative ways. We have to find bold ways. We have to have the guts as a government to make those hard decisions, and we doing that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the Premier that one of the reasons why we have an aging population is because we are

losing all our young people because you have failed to diversify the economy in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: I say, Mr. Speaker, the government just opened a new 460-bed, public, long-term care facility in Pleasantville. He just went on to say that he has known all the good stories that are happening in all the other provinces about privatization of long-term care. If privatization of long-term care was so good, why didn't you do it in Pleasantville?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought that question was going to come earlier during Question Period, but it took a little bit longer for the Leader of the Opposition to get to it.

Mr. Speaker, when we developed our plan, Close to Home, it was a 2012 strategy. It is one of the strategies that people opposite, members opposite, say oh, they are kicking around, collecting dust. Well, Mr. Speaker, we do not have things collecting dust over here, I can tell you –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: – because we are concerned about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are worried about the programs and we are worried about the services, Mr. Speaker.

I read in *The Telegram* today comments from the Member for Virginia Waters. She shows – if you read the paper, you will see what care and concern they have for public servants of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, because she talks about it. Until she sees the books, she does not know who they are going to kick to the curb. That is the Liberal way of doing business. We are finding new ways, requests for the people and requests for the people who work for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I say to the Premier, it seems to me they are going to need a strategy to implement strategies with this particular government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, a new long-term care facility for Corner Brook has been promised now for over eight years. Government's functional program calls for 159 beds in that facility, which is 120 for residential care, ten for rehab, ten for restorative care, fifteen for palliative care. Today, government said that a private company would build a 120-bed facility.

I ask the Premier: Who is responsible for the other thirty-nine beds as government promised, or are you planning on cutting those beds?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. We are in fact contracting with the private sector to build and operate 120 long-term care beds; however, we are also going to enter into a unique contract on that particular facility in Corner Brook. That also includes the thirty-nine beds that the member references, for restorative care, for rehab, and for palliative care. That is all part of the plan. So there will be a unique arrangement in Corner Brook that addresses that very need, but the exciting thing about this proposal, Mr. Speaker, is that as a result of this move today the facility in Corner Brook will be open a year earlier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I have heard that echo before in this Chamber, I say. The people in Corner Brook have heard it many, many times. The minister, as he just mentioned in his comments there, seemed pretty certain that they have talked to a company.

I ask the minister, or ask the Premier: Have you had any discussions specifically with any companies in long-term care providing the service in Corner Brook?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. However, we have on an ongoing basis received inquiries from companies that are interested in coming to Newfoundland and Labrador to do business. There are major players throughout Canada, even as close as in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, who have expressed interest in coming here and setting up shop.

As part of the market sounding that Partnerships BC will conduct over the next couple of weeks, it is players like that they will be consulting with to determine the level of interest that exists in those players coming to Newfoundland and Labrador to create jobs here and to do business here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, we were told in 2007 that the long-term care facility for the West Coast was about to start. It did not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. FLYNN: The Minister of Health told us that it would begin last summer. It did not. Then he said it would begin last fall around election time. It did not. It is a litany of broken promises.

Now that the project is to be a public-private partnership, I ask the minister: Will this new arrangement mean even more delays and more broken promises for the people of the West Coast?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge that the people of the West Coast have waited too long for the construction of the new hospital campus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I also want to assure members of the House, and I want to assure the public, that we remain committed to building the new West Coast Hospital campus in Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: The announcement today is going to allow us to get the long-term care component built faster with no capital investment required on the part of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador, and beyond that, our operating costs will be less. The good news for the families of the West Coast and the people who will be impacted by the construction of this facility is that it will be open a year earlier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FLYNN: Mr. Speaker, we sure hope it is not later, because the last time we spoke about this project the minister said he had a big decision to make: call a public tender, or call an RFP. He said he could not decide until he had the functional plan. So I am assuming that the announcement today means that a functional plan is finally ready.

I ask the minister: When can we and the public expect that plan to be made public?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the work of the Corner Brook care team continues on the acute care component of the hospital campus. We will have discussions with the Corner Brook care team today around this change of direction in terms of procurement approach, and the work that has been done to date will be extremely valuable as we can move forward.

What I want to say, though, Mr. Speaker, is that the bigger issue here is that as a result of today's announcement the people who are lying on stretchers in hospitals, the people who are tying up acute care beds at significant cost who should be in long-term care homes, those concerns are getting addressed. Those are real concerns for people and for families in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what this announcement today is all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday, as part of planning to use baby boomers' retirement as a strategy to manage the public service, the minister announced \$300,000 of new spending that was supposed to provide government insights on how to operate more efficiently. To many, this sounds familiar. Back in Budget 2012, this same government announced a core mandate review that was also supposed to acknowledge the exact same thing.

I ask the minister: How much money have you spent doing these reviews, and why are you repeating what you were supposed to have already done in 2012?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, one thing the member opposite should have realized from her

previous career, that continuous improvement is just that, it continues. We are always looking for innovative ways to enhance the programs and services that we provide. We are always looking for innovative ways to improve on efficiencies.

We make no apologies at all, Mr. Speaker, for always and continuously looking for ways to do things better. If we are able to provide enhancements to public services and do it more effectively and efficiently, we will never stop doing that, and we make no apologies for doing it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that you actually have to start something in order to continuously improve it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, in 2012 the core mandate review was one of the cornerstones of this government's 10-Year Sustainability Plan. The taxpayers of this Province paid \$500 million for that plan. Now this government is going to spend another \$300,000 and the results of the latest review are supposed to be the cornerstone of their latest five-year plan.

I ask the minister: It is time to stop the waste and get the finances under control, will he explain to the people of the Province why he and his government continue to do reviews and waste taxpayers' money?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, what she did not share with the public in her comment a moment ago was that I said yesterday we were going to engage some outside expertise to work with the public service. A public service, I

might add, that we have a tremendous respect for and we are always upfront with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: I shared yesterday what our plan was for the next five years with our public service, unlike the member opposite who says I have to wait until I have a look at the books before I decide which ones I am going to get rid of. So we are upfront, Mr. Speaker. We were very clear yesterday that we are going to work with –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: We were very clear that we were going to work with our public service –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: We are going to provide some guidance in that process. Clearly, our commitment is to work with our current public servants to ensure that we improve efficiencies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, in January, 2014, the Statutory Review Committee presented its final report to the Minister of Service NL. Stakeholders have had an opportunity to provide feedback and government has had plenty of time to conduct its analysis to prepare recommendations.

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission: When will you be releasing a response to the statutory review?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am happy to stand on my feet and answer actually the first question from the member. With regard to the statutory review, I am happy to say that a great deal of work has been done. It now sits with government, and we are putting together a response to that. It is a very important piece of work. While some people see simply challenges with workplace health, and safety, I see opportunities and opportunities of how we can improve the process. That is where I am as a minister. That is where we are as a government. It is an important piece of work. Let us make sure when we do it, let's do it right.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South has time for a quick question.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, according to the Premier's mandate letter, the minister has to undertake a comprehensive review of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division to examine the backlog.

I ask the minister: When can we expect that review?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: I will say to the member that that is a piece of work that is ongoing as well, but I am also happy to say that with regard to the review commissioner we are actually in the process of hiring on another full-time commissioner, as well as filling vacancies that we have on that board.

Through such actions, certainly that will help with wait times. While we have made progress in recent months and years, certainly there is more progress to be made, and I think that is an important piece to it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Today the government made an out-of-the-blue announcement dealing with the creation of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – 360 new, badly needed long-term care beds through privatization.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: We have evidence from Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the provinces that quality of long-term care deteriorates when the profit motive is brought in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: So I ask the Premier: What evidence does government have to show that is not going to happen here?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A few minutes ago, the Minister of Finance referenced the respect that we have for public servants in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the people who deliver services for us, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: I want to reiterate that because I can tell you, I, for one, and as Premier of this Province am very proud of the work that our people do for government service and delivery of services throughout Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: – and that is especially true as well in health care.

We have a standard of care and a quality of care that we are very proud of. We are going to ensure through this process that the partners that we are going to have in providing these long-term care beds will have the same quality of care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the Premier, the overwhelming evidence is that privatized nursing homes lower operating costs by paying lower wages, de-unionizing, laying people off, and cutting staff from these facilities.

So I ask the Premier: What evidence does he have that quality care can be maintained for seniors when this happened?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, what we are doing, we are going to provide quality long-term care beds for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are going to alleviate the pressures on acute care beds that we see; that pushes down to causing surgeries to be delayed.

The member opposite has stood in her place and talked about, what are we going to do about the delays in services and the delays in surgeries? Members opposite has got up and asked us: What are we going to do about crowded

emergency rooms because there is no bed for them to go into?

What we are going to do is we are going to fix that. We are going to great steps to fix that. We are going to provide quality care for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are going to provide it in Corner Brook. We are going to provide it in Grand Falls-Windsor. We are going to provide it in Gander. We are going to provide it here on the Northeast Avalon, and we are going to create jobs while we do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier – he was not around at the time, but his government was and he should have the answer – who, during the consultation process around long-term care, said do privatization? Because I certainly did not hear it and it was not in the report.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have to look too far from this very building, where we are all located here today, where there is private operator, Chancellor Park, who provides a privately operated centre and provides long-term care beds that we pay a per-bed fee for every month.

Mr. Speaker, I have experienced myself as an MHA when people who are in the stage of life when they are ready to go to long-term care have contacted me in my office and said: Can you make it so I go to Chancellor Park? Because that is the place they want to go. MHAs on this side of the House have experienced it many times. People want to go to Chancellor Park because they see it as a good alternative.

Doing partnerships with private business and not-for-profits is not a bad thing, Mr. Speaker.

It is good thing. It is going to provide jobs. It is going to provide construction jobs. It is going to provide care for the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A stop-work order has recently been issued at Muskrat Falls for safety reasons. It is a stark reminder that Labrador's industrial sites need regular and frequent inspections to protect workers. Labrador West has had no OHS officer now for several years. Flying people in and out simply is not good enough to cover the gap.

I ask the minister: Can he tell us when two OHS vacancies in Labrador West will be filled?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that there was a stop-work order issued to a subcontractor on the Muskrat Falls build. There were no injuries, so good for that, but we are looking into it. There is another contractor taking over the work.

Our OHS officers in Labrador – it is very difficult to recruit people to go to Labrador to live and work there. We are experiencing it in other departments as well.

We have recruited – we have two full-time positions around the Island. We are flying people in and out of Labrador on a regular basis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: The work is getting done. The inspections are getting done –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CRUMMELL: Occupational health and safety is an important facet of what our government provides to the people of the Province, and we will continue to do that work and make sure workplaces are safe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Occupational cancers among firefighters are recognized and covered by workers' compensation in other provinces, but not this one, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: There has been no movement by government in this Province so far.

I ask the minister: When will firefighters be covered for the cancers they are getting on the job in this Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, for the member to suggest that we are not looking at that is certainly foolhardy. On a case-by-case basis, firefighters are being considered.

I want to make sure when we arrive at the decision, whether that is to go with just career firefighters or volunteer firefighters, or either or none, I want to make sure that it is the right answer to that question. It is something very important to me personally as an MHA dealing with firefighters, particularly volunteer service firefighters. When we do that piece of work, when we arrive at the decision, again it will be the right decision.

Thank you, 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.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in the House –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in the House of Assembly Question Period, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile questioned me on an MOU between the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Ontario Provincial Police force, and I am happy to table that document here today for his perusal.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

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

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the Financial Administration Act, I am tabling two Orders-in-Council relating to funding pre-commitments for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 fiscal years.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I shall move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a resolution for the granting of supply to Her Majesty, Bill 5.

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that I will move the following motion: That the House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

WHEREAS there is no cellphone service in the Town of Trout River, which is an enclave community in Gros Morne National Park; and

WHEREAS visitors to Gros Morne National Park, more than 100,000 annually, expect to communicate by cellphone when they visit the park; and

WHEREAS cellphone service has become a very important aspect of everyday living for residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is an essential safety tool for visitors and residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to partner with the private sector to extend

cellphone coverage throughout Gros Morne National Park and the enclave community of Trout River.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petitions for cellphone coverage in Gros Morne National Park and in the Town of Trout River specifically keep on coming forward. This is still an urgent concern for people.

The government seems to have changed its focus somewhere. Over the course of the past year, having had discussions with a cellphone provider, the cellphone provider had some discussions with this government. It seemed that cellphone coverage in certain parts of the park was about to be extended, specifically in the area around Cow Head because there is an existing tower already there which is owned by Bell Aliant. So Bell Mobility could easily tap onto that.

At very modest cost the service could be improved dramatically, and gradually we would increase the footprint of cellphone coverage throughout the park, including Trout River. Although this tower probably would not reach that far south.

Mr. Speaker, for some reason all of a sudden the government put on the brakes. They did not make a public announcement, but clearly, the cellphone provider believed on reasonable grounds that cellphone coverage was going to be extended and it was not extended. There seemed to be an about-face by government on some moving forward that they were doing. The problem has not gone away. The problem will not go away until cellphone coverage is extended.

We saw recently with a snowstorm where approximately thirty or forty kilometres of road had a series of snowdrifts. Transportation and Works could clear a drift, they would go another kilometre or two and there would be another drift, five or six more kilometres and there would be another drift. People were stuck in those drifts for a significant period of time. There was no way for even the workers at Transportation and Works to be able to

communicate back to the department and say we have this cleared or that cleared.

If you could imagine, Mr. Speaker, the department itself is clearing snow and they cannot give a head's up. They have to drive to some place after the snowdrift is cleared from the highway to be able to tell the office, yes, the road is okay. It is open now.

Mr. Speaker, this is just unacceptable.

Thank you.

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the residents of Salmon Cove feel that the condition of Main Street East, located in the Town of Salmon Cove, is deplorable; and

WHEREAS residents of Salmon Cove are frustrated with the condition of the road; and

WHEREAS the government has failed to address this problem; and

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to make the necessary repairs to Main Street East.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure this afternoon to stand in my place and enter this petition on behalf of the residents of Salmon Cove. Main Street East is one of the busiest roads in the Town of Salmon Cove. It is the location of the town office, the fire department, the post office, the war memorial, not to mention the branch road which leads to most of the residences in the town.

Over the past couple of weeks the Department of Transportation and Works has addressed some of the issues with Main Street East in Salmon

Cove. I would like to thank the department for the temporary work, but, Mr. Speaker, it is that, it is a temporary solution. This road has been receiving temporary solutions for many years now. It is time that the department take the necessary action to repair this street.

Again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Salmon Cove, I ask the minister to take Main Street East into serious consideration with this year's Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 438 is the primary highway for residents of Grandois, St. Julien's, and Croque; and

WHEREAS the current gravel road conditions are dangerous for travel, given the size of potholes and debris embedded in the road; and

WHEREAS it is government's obligation to provide basic infrastructure to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS this is the primary link for residents to health care and essential services, and enhancement is needed for safety reasons;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to allocate funds in the provincial roads maintenance program to upgrade this section of Route 438.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by constituents of mine from Croque and St. Julien's. There are not a high number of signatures on this petition because there are not a lot of residents currently

living in these communities but still they require the services, and each spring the road is in dire condition. I do want to recognize and acknowledge in previous years that the minister's staff, Transportation and Works, have done some really good work in terms of clearing the road and also adding some extra stone and replacing culverts. The petitioners here are asking that this work continue, that this gravel road be well maintained throughout the season.

The community may have a small population right now but it will have an exponential population later this summer when Come Home Year takes place in these communities. There is economic potential in these towns with the potential of a copper mine. There was a past marble mine there. There is still fishing activity that takes place. We have to look at the economic opportunities in each and every individual community. I think we need to find ways to maintain, upgrade, and pave our gravel roads. Like Route 438, this one needs to be certainly upgraded, and Route 434, Conche Road, should be paved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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 most communities in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair do not have adequate broadband service; and

WHEREAS residents, businesses, students, nurses and teachers rely heavily on the Internet to complete an increasing number of everyday tasks online; and

WHEREAS there are a number of world-class tourism sites in the region including Battle Harbour Historic Site and the Mealy Mountains National Park;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the

House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide adequate broadband service to the communities along the Labrador Coast.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it is only when I am home in the district that I can really get a firsthand understanding of the frustration the residents there are dealing with from day to day. When I am home in the district, in my community it is virtually impossible for me to do anything with our broadband beyond sending and receiving a simple email.

It is 2015, and that is not good enough. I know the service provider has submitted an updated proposal. So I am urging government to work with the federal counterpart and to submit the amount they need and to work with the service provider to increase the capacity. The speed is extremely slow, and most of the communities in the region are closed to sales.

Mr. Speaker, there are many government programs we could talk about that are encouraging and promoting people to go online. There is BizPal, there is Motor Vehicle Registration, but you cannot push people to do that and say you are going to save money if you fill things out online when not every community has equal access to that, Mr. Speaker. We cannot have everything like larger areas in rural parts, but we can certainly have the infrastructure to go online and do many things equal to other parts.

This is a service, broadband, that is seriously lacking in rural parts, especially in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. We have a group of concerned citizens there who have started a Facebook site. There is lots of feedback and they are looking to see if there is anything that they could do legally around the frustration with that.

I will continue to get up and present a petition on their behalf on this issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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 violent workplace incidents involving convenience store clerks and gas station attendants are a serious health and safety issue; and

WHEREAS many public and private sector employees are being left in vulnerable situations, especially in the opening and closing of their buildings and establishments; and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – WHEREAS all workers deserve protection from danger and harm; and

WHEREAS current government regulations are woefully inadequate in providing even basic protection for these vulnerable workers; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of employers to keep workers safe, and the responsibility of government to ensure employers adhere to regulations.

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately enact legislation and regulations to protect workers –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – in hazardous workplaces, including late-night shifts in convenience stores and gas stations. This legislation must direct employers to have a minimum of two workers on site after 10:00 p.m. and before 6:00 a.m., or

have a secure barrier between the worker and the customer in place between these hours.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I am very pleased to present this on behalf of the petitioners, especially on this day, April 28, when we are dealing with such a serious issue as the death of workers both on the worksite and because of disease.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: This day of mourning reminds us of the dangers that workers are under.

Quite recently, I think within the last two weeks, we saw on the news a worker where three people came in to rob the convenience store that the worker was working in. Luckily, it was not at night, but it did show something – the person did not get injured. What it showed was what could happen when you have just one person working. Three people came in and were able to do the robbery – because there were three of them and only one worker, they were able to keep the person preoccupied and have the robbery take place.

What would have happened if that had been at night, for example? What could have happened if the people who had come in, when there was a lone worker, were people who were going to be violent? In this case, it did not happen.

Recently, I know of a young worker who was in the convenience store where that worker works, part of a robbery there. That worker is now in counselling and being helped because of that robbery, because of the traumatic effect of the robbery on this young worker.

So we really do have to take this seriously – this petition – that government does have a responsibility to make it safe for workers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition related to government's policy related to snow clearing in rural areas. The petition reads: To the hon. House of Assembly in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the provincial government has changed policy related to snow clearing in rural areas of the Province in an arbitrary way without proper consultation; and

WHEREAS this policy change did not establish procedures for determining when new roads could be added to those eligible for snow clearing in unincorporated rural areas; and

WHEREAS there has been significant problems created in relation to provision of services such as garbage collection and emergency services;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to review and update policies related to snow clearing.

As duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition was started by a gentleman, Ron King, in St. David's in the district that I represent. He was initially, I guess, concerned about his own situation, where to get to his house in winter he had to clear a public road – not just his own driveway, but a public road to get up to his house.

It is interesting that once he began to circulate a petition on this issue, other people in the area began to recognize that this was an issue that existed in many other places as well, Mr. Speaker. So a huge number of people have signed his petition. I will be presenting them here in the House.

It is an interesting issue because the snow clearing policy – there is no way to add new roads, new routes, to the area. There is no possibility for growth in these rural areas in terms of areas that can have their roads upgraded or snow cleared for them in the winter. It is

creating a number of problems for people in these areas.

Also, local service districts in these areas have noted and wrote the minister on this issue to note that things like garbage collection and fire services are problems in these areas as well because they do not have the snow clearing that they need. It is an issue that needs attention.

What the petitioners are asking is that government review their policy in relation to the maintenance of these roads. Rather than keep the roads maintained, the government has chosen not to review that policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time. I ask that government consider this petition.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call first of all Motion 1, and move, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, April 28, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House not adjourn at 5:30 o'clock today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also further move Motion 3, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, that pursuant to Standing Order 11, the

House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Tuesday, April 28, 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion is that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call Order 2, second reading of a bill, An Act To Provide The Public With Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy, Bill 1.

MR. SPEAKER: Resuming debate on Bill 1, I recognize the hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is always great – most people, when we stand in our place we thank the great people of our districts for sending us here to represent them. We know at any time they have a right to change their mind in the things that we do and deliberation on their behalf. I certainly hope that I do, in the comments that I make, please the people of my district and that the relationship may continue.

Today is a new day, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that is all right to understand. In the beginning, in starting to talk about Bill 1 today, maybe I need to set up for everyone who is listening here. I know everybody is really intent, their ears are peeled, and they are all paying direct attention but there are people at home who are also paying attention. They may not have seen yesterday. They may not have followed all that has

happened before. So what we are doing here on the floor of the House today, for all of the people at home, we are debating Bill 1.

Many MHAs stand up and we pick up a package of paper and we say we are talking about a bill, Mr. Speaker. Most bills, when people see it on camera, they pretty much look alike. The difference with this bill, as I get into my comments, that is a little different is that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: Mr. Speaker, this bill is rather substantial. This bill has ninety-nine pages in it. It is probably the largest bill that we have paid attention to. The Explanatory Notes in this bill are longer than some of the other bills that come before this House. That should give some merit to the importance that is being placed on this, and I will get back to that, Mr. Speaker.

A few days ago we did receive a briefing, as everybody has referred to, and in the briefing there was an excitement on the part of what was happening here from the people in the department. We are sort of correcting a course, or we are taking an action that is improving upon actions of the past. We are correcting and redirecting or repealing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: We are changing the direction in which we are going, Mr. Speaker, to admit that like anywhere you go, you do need to look ahead, plot what is ahead of you, and steer your course based on the best possible route of getting to your end goal.

Yesterday I heard the Member for St. John's East when he talked about the former Premier in deciding about this – and he admitted in his talk and said the Premier actually realized that maybe a mistake had been done, and that Premier was setting about a course of action whereby we would correct a previous action.

He alluded to the idea of not only is justice being done, perception of justice is being done. I think that Premier in his wisdom, Premier Marshall, in selecting the Committee, he had to show that perception. He had to really strongly portray that and show that. Not only was there just an ordinary committee picked for this, Mr. Speaker, but a fine committee picked because this Premier, Premier Marshall, had to search for someone who he would assume – this is not just a government that is putting a commission in place that is going to fix a problem for the government but the people he is putting there, to see this perception of justice, he chose someone who was a former Premier representing an opposite side of the House to fit, as a former Liberal Premier, to steer this commission.

Premier Marshall wanted to make sure that the people of Newfoundland felt that this was not just getting lip service; it was going to be corrected. Well, I would like to thank Premier Marshall for his foresight. I would also like to thank the commission for their fine, intense activity that took place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: We feel very sure that the correct information, the correct intent, was placed in the deliberations that took place in this commission.

This commission, Mr. Speaker, has come back with the heftiest bill, I guess, that we will possibly ever have, and it obviously covers all areas. From notes, from talking, it has ninety recommendations. Now, these ninety recommendations are not light recommendation either. Sixty-seven of them are legislative; sixty-five are considered in this piece of legislation here.

The other recommendations deal with policy. So, this commission also looked at the policies and the procedures that happen within the Office of ATIPP, within these offices, for the co-ordinator and everybody else what would happen there. There is a whole pile of information that this Committee sifted through. It met with the public and there was far more attention this time around than there was the last time around when they were doing the review of

the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.

Since this report has come, Mr. Speaker, some advance work has been done. A transition team was formed. In the anticipation of enacting most of this legislation that the commission returned as their report, then the department took it so seriously that they looked it through and they have had to go back to the Commissioner, the lead Commissioner, former Premier Wells, to talk about the intent of some of the recommendations, to interpret some of the actions and recommendations they have such that the legislation was put together correctly.

What happens is in through the legislation, through this, we looked at the role of the ATIPP co-ordinator. We looked at the fees and the processes and procedures that need to take place. We also looked at timelines as they are shared, Mr. Speaker. We also looked at the public interest override. I will speak to some of these topics individually a little later. We also looked at the exceptions to the ability for access to everything, and what are exceptions and things that should not and cannot be put out there into the public at the current time.

Basically what we have and what we have put together and found put together here in its greatest form is legislation that is hailed as the best in the country. Finally, we have what is best in the country. Now, we did not go to the worst of the pack before with what we had before, but we were down in the steps. In the correction that we have taken, we have come now, Mr. Speaker, to be one of the leaders in the country.

Mr. Speaker, what lessons did the government learned? What lessons did we learn when we looked at this? We have learned that the public has a vested interest in everything that takes place. Everybody in our Province in this great land of Newfoundland and Labrador needs to have a say, and their say needs to be heard. That is what this is taking into account.

We could have said this legislation would be reviewed again in a couple of years' time. This legislation will be reviewed in its due course. Mr. Speaker, it was important enough that it needed to be done currently, not further into the

future. We will find obviously all kinds of reasons from both sides of this House why that had to be done. Basically, there were some corrections that needed to be made. Action is taken and will be taken, and it will lead to a much better process for the people of our Province.

Talking about the role of the ATIPP co-ordinator in this, one of the things – and I am not going to talk about everything. If you are going to size up all ninety-nine pages and talk through this, you are going to be here a lot longer than your allotted time. I do not know if I will take all of my time today, but I will consider when I am satisfied that I have covered the topics that I wanted to add to.

I have always said when I get up to speak that we have forty-eight individuals in the House, but forty-seven get an active say in most of the things. Mr. Speaker, you will get your say in the way it comes out to referee all of that.

When everyone in this Chamber gets to have their say, if we all add to the debate, then even if we said one unique or one different thing, we have added one little bit of uniqueness to the legislation, or to the comments that people have to consider. What I say may help some people on this side to consider, it may help someone on the other side to consider. So, in a way, we all have that right to get up and speak and say our mind and say what we think is the best of how this works.

Well, the one thing about the ATIPP coordinator that I looked at and saw with this change and the way things are working now is that unless some other individuals requested to be a part of a search, then the ATIPP coordinator is potentially the only one who is going to be there – which gives some protection to the person who is doing the search, that they are not sending this off to some Cabinet minister to do the search or some other official in the department. That coordinator is the one who chooses what gets searched and how much.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that is very important is the person who has asked for the search to be done has an anonymity. That is the person who is looking does not know who they are searching for. That way you put equal

weight into the search that you make. You do the best search you can do. You do not know who is asking for this. You have no preconceived notion of how important or how highfalutin this person is who is looking for the information. You know fairness is being done. That is the way things have to be looked at. You have to look at this along fairness and openness, and the impartiality that you do not know who you are searching for. So, the type of applicant and the identity of the applicant is not known.

Now, the other part of this is the idea of timeliness. The whole process has to take place in certain prescribed allotments of time, and that time has been tightened up. I am not going to get into the little nitty-gritty details of how many days it is tightened up, or whether it is now calendar days or work days. The thing is in the whole analysis people know that their searches are done in a timely fashion and information is returned to them, and it is the information they are looking for.

The whole idea of fees being reduced or costs being reduced, well, the \$5 application fee would probably not be a deterrent to most people, but in this case it is removed. The other thing is the number of hours that would go into the looking. It is just for the looking that you are paying for. It is not what you are doing with the files to prepare them for the individual after you retrieve them. It is just basically looking for the request.

The other thing I wanted to quickly look at is this idea of the public interest override. It can override in both ways, I guess. One is it can override to prevent information from coming out if it is not in the best interest of the whole community. There may be a member of the Opposition, a member of the press, or a member of the government who wants to know the information, but if the information they want is not in the best interest of the whole Province, then it should not come out. On the other hand, this whole idea of an override should go the other way, just like most everything.

It is to the point that if you have a piece of information you want to protect, then there is an override that says you cannot keep it if it is in the best interest of the people. There are two ways this public interest override goes into play,

but the best of it is, is that it is in the public's interest. That is the reason why they call it a public interest disclosure. It is not for the interest of the searcher. It is for the interest of the public in total. This is very important that it comes out along that line and people understand it that way.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing is with regard to the exceptions of why certain things may not be available for view for everyone. Some of these things have not changed and they are going to stay that way, Mr. Speaker. Although, what constitutes a public body or what constitutes a part of a town council or any of these entities is very important as to if it is protected or not, and if it was not a part of this before. So, the whole realm of what information is out there that the public may think they need access to, but it is also the people who look for it and who are there.

The whole thing about it is that at this point we are correcting the action. At this point we are saying in the best interest of everyone, we have pulled up our socks. We have tightened this in a way that everybody should feel happy and protected about the amount of information you can get and the protection is there. Plus, it is also every other aspect.

It is not just the Bill 29 aspect of the two or three recommendations that Bill 29 addressed. This Commission now has looked at the entire A-T-I-P-P, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Once upon a time, no one had ever really thought about how that flicked together. Now it is such a thing that you have a word coined now, ATIPP – oh I 'ATIPPed' that or I searched that. So now because of the lingo – when everything comes out then we sort of educate ourselves and we become more finely tuned to that. It is good that we have the whole idea together, Mr. Speaker.

I also thought about how much or how many times an ordinary person in our Province, Mr. Speaker, looks for information, under what circumstance they would look under. For instance, talking about my district, in the last three years, since Bill 29, and up to today, I have had one constituent who has called looking for information. Is it looking for information about government? No, it is not. It is personal

information about a personal legal matter that the person is involved in.

The number of people who would have been accessing information, looking for anything that Bill 29 or this Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act would have impacted – if mine is the average type district, there are very few. The persons mainly, I would assume, Mr. Speaker, would be people involved with government on a day-to-day basis, whether they are a part of the Legislature, or they are a part of the press gallery are probably the two largest groups that would search for the information. Maybe our policies and everything else could work to their best interests in a different way.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard access not granted is access denied, justice denied. So if there are not that many people looking for this – but the main thing is if there was one, then they have to have the right to this legislation that would generate the proper search, the proper way to guide them through, the ATIPP coordinator guide through the actions to make sure that in a timely fashion the request for the information is granted back.

I think I have really exhausted more time than I thought I was going to do today. I have not been too flamboyant about it, or have not whatever, but that is not my style. I just thought there are a few things there that I have to have a little say about. Some of it was coming from constituents; some of it was from my own personal observations. The ability to be able to stand today to represent and to ask these questions or to throw that information in there is very important to me, it is very important to my district, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to do that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before I start, first of all I would like to thank the people in my District of

Carbonear – Harbour Grace for allowing me the opportunity to speak here on this bill and any other bill. I would like to thank the people in my district for that.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House and share a few words on Bill 1, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I sat here yesterday and I listened to the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, and I have to say that I was a little bit taken back by the comment that he made. The comment that he made was that he felt a little bit upset that we were blaming them for Bill 29.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure that member over there, that minister, that they have been blaming us since prior to 2003, and he felt offended by that because we were doing that. I will tell you, Bill 29 – now, I was not here in this House during the debate on Bill 29, but I watched it very much so on TV, all seventy hours.

The media were out there and the Open Line shows and everything else, and they were telling you, guys, you are making a mistake. You are hammering Newfoundland into the ground over there. It was out in the media. I can guarantee you, that is exactly what was done by Bill 29. You infringed up on the rights of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; that is what this group done.

Mr. Speaker, it is called Bill 1, in political circles, but out in my district and other rural districts in Newfoundland and Labrador it is better known as the backtracking bill. Bill 1 is an attempt to correct a terrible wrong imposed upon our people and Province and our democracy in 2012 by Bill 29. It has taken government over three years and three leaders to right this wrong.

You see, this secret government wanted to deny the people of our Province basic information. I will say, Mr. Speaker, thank God that Premier Marshall came along and seen the light. Thank God that he gave the people in this Province an opportunity to fix this awful wrong that was done to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, what this bill did, it made it more difficult to obtain critical information

and data to those who were trying to keep government accountable, or to private individuals who were just seeking some information, details on matters of concern to them.

Since 2013, I have been the official MHA responsible for Fisheries and Aquaculture and I can attest to the difficulty of trying to wrangle Fisheries and Aquaculture information out of this government, and it is a revolving door of ministers. Let me add, that this doesn't just happen in Access to Information requests. It happens quite regularly in Question Periods.

Mr. Speaker, I touched on a few outstanding issues on the outright denial, or the objections placed by this government in trying to access information on Fisheries and Aquaculture. Aquaculture, in response to an ATIPPA request early June 2014 from our office, information on the pesticide, Slice, used in control of sea lice in aquaculture, government responded that part of the information would require a fee of \$34,900 to process this information.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard me correct; nearly \$35,000 to seek some clarity on how much and how often a pesticide was being used in our pristine waters by the fish farm industry. The public wanted to be reassured the most optimum practices were being used.

Do you know why it would cost that much? It is because government was not doing its due diligence. It was not even tracking this vital information on a systemic basis.

Back in March 2013, our office had sent a simple request for information of sea lice in fish farms. Were they high? Were they low? Government clearly did not want us to know, or felt that it was privileged information, or maybe just did not know since they were not doing their own due diligence.

First, they denied us the information and nearly a year later, in February 2014, they relented under pressure; but – and here is the big but, Mr. Speaker – only if we would pay \$19,400 to government to release this information that should have been made public in the first place.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. SLADE: I said \$19,400.

Of course, we did not pay this exorbitant fee; otherwise, we would have to layoff somebody in the office. Even on a promise by one of the revolving fisheries ministers to supply this information in response to a question in the House, we still did not get that information, Mr. Speaker. To top it all off, this is the same information that is mandated to post online out in British Columbia – true story.

I am proud to report that because of our asking and pressures, what a good Opposition does, government realized they just were not doing their jobs and they approved money to not only keep better track of sea lice, but also to mitigate the levels of sea lice.

Mr. Speaker – and I am going to go back a little bit here now to the other side. The people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador when Bill 29 came in, they were absolutely floored that their members on the other side could sit there and vote for such a thing, and also to let them down, the way they let them down, and then to call off the debate. It was absolutely unbelievable. It was unbelievable that you guys did that to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

On July 17, 2014, DFA recognized that its sea lice monitoring process was not up to par. It announced that it would provide \$80,000 to the aquaculture association to help establish the test of a new fish health monitoring software for monitoring sea lice prevalence and evaluating control programs. New Brunswick have been using this innovative software since 2012 with great success.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was an upside in making the ATIPP request. It helped improve the way the department was regulating the industry.

On the other ATIPP requests that were rather outstanding, in that they exposed government being indecisive on issues for years on top of years, in 2010, government commissioned a report on the direct selling by harvesters to people in tourism in this Province. Our office 'ATIPPed' for the report when it was complete in 2011. We were refused on the justification that the report was in the realm of Cabinet

confidence. In 2014 we 'ATIPPed' a second time for this report that government was not acting on and it was collecting dust.

I heard somebody over there today – I think it may have been the Premier – saying we do not sit on reports over here. They do not collect dust. Well, I can assure the Premier and this group over here that this is one report that was collecting dust, Mr. Speaker.

Government came to their senses but not without more stalling. Yes, they announced they were planning to release the report through proactive disclosure after forty-five days. Now that is ironic, Mr. Speaker, proactive disclosure by this government. If we had not spent years of badgering them, that report would still be locked away. Finally, on day forty-six, a copy of the report was quietly posted on the DFA website. Were it not for the Opposition's three days of filibustering debate on Bill 29 and public outcry against the draconian bill, we would not have Bill 1.

Mr. Speaker, this government does nothing proactively. It is very good at inaction. OCI and the Fortune plant is another example I will use of how secretly this government likes to operate. Our office recently contacted the Fisheries department to seek answers on over a dozen questions on the Fortune plant, and if the operator was holding up to the agreement signed with our Province in December, 2012.

We had heard there was more activity in a fisherman's shed than was in that plant. The response was: None of the answers could be provided as most of the questions are specific to the operator's business. This was the same operator who had clearly broken the solemn agreement with the hardworking plant workers in our communities who eventually went public with their concerns and assessment that this government is still choosing not to be open, accountable and transparent even when it involves the giveaways of our resources. That is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, was Bill 29 a mistake? No, it was not a mistake. It was a massive mistake, a monumental mistake, a monstrous mistake, a moral mistake and, yes,

even a money mistake. It will cost the taxpayers over \$1.1 million to correct this mistake.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 is like a delayed justice. Bill 1 is also a clear repeal of Bill 29. Bill 1 replaces Bill 29. The official secrets act is in the shredder where it belongs, and that is a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

The bill that one democracy watcher called the biggest step backwards in access in Canada in recent memory. The bill could be called the DarkNL bill, it is finally blacked out. The review committee has done a great job. We would like to recognize their expertise and commitment, and their ninety recommendations in this process. To those across the Province who spoke out time and time again against Bill 29, I think Bill 1 is a reminder that when there are enough voices speaking and working together change can happen.

I support Bill 1, and I would like to dedicate it to the people of our Province whose voices will always be heard above all the politics. We are here on their behalf. This is their Province. Bill 1 rights many wrongs, Mr. Speaker, but this government has a fair ways to go before the justice job is complete. In the words of the review commissioner, Clyde Wells: in the end the public interest is what is important.

I would like to say thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour to stand and speak to Bill 1 in this hon. House. I have heard my colleagues opposite talk very eloquently about where Bill 1 is. I have heard people on this side outline exactly what this means for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and how it is a very creative, a very innovative, and a very important piece of legislation that we are proposing.

It does two things, Mr. Speaker. It makes us world leaders and it gives the people of Newfoundland and Labrador confidence that they have not only access to information that they should be entitled to, but the protection of the information in relationship to the work they do with government to ensure that only the information that should be released to people, that is pertinent to the people of this Province, should be released. It is a balance of protecting those who do business in Newfoundland and Labrador with government and our citizens, and citizens having the rights to have access to information.

Mr. Speaker, a very learned colleague of mine said in the introduction of this piece of legislation: As you know, our government is developing Newfoundland and Labrador's first Open Government Action Plan reflecting the best open government practices in the world. The plan will nurture a culture of openness with government by promoting access to information and data, and enhanced dialogue and collaboration on initiatives.

The Open Government Initiative will exist alongside the strongest access to information and protection of privacy legislation anywhere in Canada. Mr. Speaker, that obviously is a testament to what this side of the House does and outlines for the people of this Province. It is about getting the right piece of legislation, making sure it meets the needs of the people in this Province, and ensuring that everybody in this House can live with it, everybody in this House agrees with it.

I have full confidence that – when we get to a point when everybody has had their open dialogue and everybody has voiced their opinions – people on all sides of the House here will vote for this piece of legislation because it meets the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and it puts us as world leaders. So the people who want to do business in this Province understand that their information can be accessed by citizens here, but at the same time there are protections here around what they do and what is accessible.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago I stood in this House and I spoke around the predecessor to Bill 1. It was then that I also believed people do

need to have protection, people do need to have access. It is what our legislation is all about. It is about protecting the citizens of our Province. This is another very important part of what we are doing in this valued House.

At the time, it was a very open dialogue. It was very heated at times. The filibuster is a very important part of our democratic process and a very important part of what we do in the House of Assembly. It shows that everybody has the right as elected officials, and the people expect them to voice their concerns, be open, be sincere, and reflect exactly what they are hearing in the public. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt all hon. members did that, and I respect that.

I also respect the fact that from my constituents I did not hear the same concerns that others did. That does not mean it did not exist out there. I am not disputing that. My citizens asked if this would affect how the ferries ran. Would it affect employment? Would it affect their pensions? No, it did not. So they said they were not worried about it. I wanted to outline to them that it was still very important that pieces of legislation like this exist and that they take a part in ensuring that the hon. members in this House put the right piece of legislation in place and it reflects their needs. So they have a right to tell us. If there is something missing let us know. We want to correct it.

I keep saying in my department, if we are doing something right please tell us so we continue to do it. Sometimes – and I was a civil servant for most of my life – we get complacent. When things keep going the right way, we change it for the sake of changing it. Tell us if we are doing it right so we can continue to do it that way. If we are doing it wrong, particularly outline that so we can go back and reflect on it and get input, have dialogue, and include people so we find out what is the best way of doing it.

Mr. Speaker, that is where we are today with Bill 1. We have started that process. We went back and we had looked a piece of legislation that we put in place, but we had heard from stakeholder groups out there. We had heard from other entities. We had heard, but particularly from the citizens or a number of citizens in Newfoundland and Labrador that they were not quite confident that this could be the

best piece of legislation out there to represent their needs in protecting them and giving them proper access to information.

So, we went back and said well, if the people are not totally confident – we want them to be confident on what we put in this House and what we put as legislation. Because it is to live on for generations and generations and for it to be proper for the people in this Province, it has to be given the right scrub. If the right scrub says we need to go back and reflect on exactly what we did and make it work, then that is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

In this case, I do give full respect to the former Premier who, when he took over office, sat down and said let's go back and reflect what we have done over the last number of years, what are some of the things that if we had our time back now we might have taken a little bit more time to reflect on, and have a little bit more dialogue around exactly where we are going and be open enough to listen to Opposition members and to the general public because they have good views and they have some good experiences and they have constituents too who have issues around what we do in government.

We went back and said okay, let's do that, but let's do it outside of the House of Assembly. Because if do it in here we all get labeled, to a certain degree, that we are narrow minded because we are respecting only those who talk in our ears from our own constituents. Let's look at the broader sense, let's look at all of the stakeholders out there, let's engage them, but particularly let's find an outside entity to drive that process. That way it is impartial and everybody gets equal opportunity to have input.

That is what we did. The Premier went out, he engaged the process of saying let's pick a group of individuals who we know have an expertise in different components of access to information, about how information should be shared, how information should be gathered, how then the process of outlining to people how they have that access, what is the complicated parts of it, what is the very easily accessible part, what does it cost for people, how does somebody in Englee have to access to it as somebody on Elizabeth Avenue in St. John's has access, how do we make that parallel workable for people here.

The vision of the Premier and this Administration was: Let's go do that. So a process was put in place, a very detailed process of first identifying who has the credibility and the expertise out there. Mr. Speaker, obviously we all are aware of the three individuals who led this process. They are very articulate individuals, very committed to this Province – somebody from outside who has a specialized skill set in this field so we would know that we could take into account other jurisdictions. What would be the mean and what would be the target, where the bar would be set for making sure that we had proper access to information legislation.

Mr. Speaker, those individuals were given a loose terms of reference and asked help define that. We are giving you full freedom here to help define exactly what it is we need to do to get the proper legislation so that the people of this Province are confident that the decisions made in this House of Assembly will work for them and the next generations and generations down the road to protect the people of this Province; and that the piece of legislation that will be brought to this House should be done so well that all members of this House, regardless of your political stripe, would stand up and very proudly vote for it and say yes, the people of this Province got good legislation and are protected. That is what we set out to do.

A process was put in place, an open concept of dialogue and an open concept of giving people an opportunity to present what their views were, their understandings; but particularly, at the beginning, the Committee itself wanted to make sure people had an understanding of what this piece of legislation would be about. At times when you talk about legislation in the House of Assembly, the average person has not been engaged in it. They have other things in their lives that they need to deal with. They do not sit down and read the intricate workings of legislation and the process to lead up to how to get to present a bill in the House of Assembly.

So, a process that was more user-friendly or more general citizen-friendly was put out there to give them an understanding. If you want to come and make a presentation, here is what we are asking. We are asking simple questions. What kind of information do you think you

should have access to in government? How open should government be with information that you share with them? How do we make this part of legislation work for everybody in this Province so it continues to show that we are an open process here and democracy works?

We wanted to make sure – and there were no holds barred. The Premier said to the Committee, we want you to go and develop a piece of legislation based on what people tell you, not based on your own views or your own concepts or your own past history, based on what people tell you, with your expertise, that would meet the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee was very in-depth and a year later came back with a great report. Prior to coming back with that report, our Premier said he had so much confidence in the process being used and the Committee members that all recommendations that were going to be put forward would blankly be accepted. Because he felt – and still does and he has spoken to this – that this process worked for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was engaging. It was all inclusive. It did not discriminate against any group of individuals or communities. It gave people those opportunities to have that input.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has acknowledged that all recommendations will be included. As you can see, this is not a handful of recommendations. It is very in-depth. It is ninety recommendations around legislation and policy which will have a major impact on line departments, on changing their philosophy, changing their operational structure, changing the resources they will need to make sure that people have access to it.

They talked about how this whole implementation process would work. They talked about having other resources, having coordinators, that you now have a first line in line departments of going to an individual or group of individuals who can advise you as to how you can access various pieces of information, and what in that information is something that would be exactly what you asked for and how it would be used as you move forward in addressing issues you may have with government or issues

you may have had with people who worked with government.

Mr. Speaker, the whole process here was about engaging internal and external structures that we have, groups within OPE, Municipal Affairs, issues around the Chief Information Officer, all the things relevant to what would be the best way, the first dialogue around the information we have, and post it.

One of the best statements made was by the Minister of Health who is responsible for the open government policy was around let's prevent – our ideal situation would be people would not come to us through the ATIPPA process looking for information because it would all be readily available, posted online, or a simple process where they would know how to access that.

That is pure open dialogue and an open, transparent government, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are striving for. This piece of legislation moves us to that level, along with our open government policy. We want to ensure that the people of this Province have that information and that there are no hindrances. That the information shared is the information that is relevant to their needs.

Mr. Speaker, we have gotten to a place now where this piece of legislation reflects that because of the input by the citizens of this Province, by some of the stakeholders, by the in-depth work done by the Committee to draft something that would be not only a good piece of legislation, but would be something that the average person could take and would understand exactly what it means and how they access that information. More importantly, how we as a government and how civil servants in this Administration understand the role they play in assuring, as citizens who request information, get that in a quick, efficient, and transparent manner.

Mr. Speaker, we have done that very eloquently through this process. This is not about flip-flopping. This is about revisiting, realizing maybe there are better ways of doing things. It is about re-engaging people. It is about re-establishing a process here that encourages people to get the information they want.

We are hoping through this process that they will maybe quadruple the inquiries, but as part of that process the beginning of the initial stages will be eliminated because the same information that they would be requesting through ATIPPA will already be available on various websites. That is about transparency, Mr. Speaker, and that is how we get to this point.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on but I know we are going to have a great open dialogue here. I am looking forward to my colleagues on the other side speaking to this bill. I am looking forward to it sometime in the near future when we all stand and vote for this piece of legislation, that we all uniformly agree it was a great piece of legislation put together. It was great work done by the committee. There was great engagement by the citizens of this Province. The next generations will have a great piece of legislation to know that they have access to information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy to stand and speak to Bill 1. Three years later, a million dollars later, loss in confidence in the government later, embarrassment on the world stage or at least the national stage later, some careers perhaps lost because of this, some careers perhaps made because of this.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand and speak to Bill 1 because this is about victory. What I would like to do is look at exactly whose victory this is; victory perhaps because we have some extremely good, solid legislation, but why? Whose work is that? Who deserves the victory? Who can claim the victory in this situation? That is what I would like to speak to a bit.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the staff who provided us with a very thorough briefing. I would like to thank the staff who worked hours upon hours upon hours under a very tight deadline, once the Statutory Review Committee

was finished, to have everything ready for us to be able to debate this piece of legislation in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when Bill 29 was presented to our caucus. That was almost three years ago. I remember when the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi – I was a very new MHA at the time, not even a year. I had been elected for just a little over half a year. The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi looked at the legislation, it was late on a Friday afternoon, and she said: Oh my God, I cannot believe this. She read a bit more and she said, I cannot believe this. She said, we are going to have to filibuster. This is so bad we are going to have to filibuster.

Mr. Speaker, I hardly knew what a filibuster was at the time – and filibuster we did. Everybody on this side of the House participated. We filibustered for seventy hours. Not because we were just playing politics or deciding to give the government a hard time, but because we knew the ramifications of the proposed legislation. We knew how regressive that legislation was.

Even though we were minorities and government had a majority, we knew that we had to do everything in our power. We knew we could not stop it, but what we could make sure that we could do, was to make sure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador understood what the legislation that was before the House, the profound effects, the regressive effects it would have on our democratic process. So we did. We did it. We filibustered.

People demonstrated. People wrote letters, they wrote emails. People filled the galleries, because people knew how important that piece of legislation was. People knew how regressive that piece of legislation was. I think the government at the time was hoping that in fact people would not really be engaged, and people would not really be that concerned about this particular piece of legislation. I truly believe, Mr. Speaker, that not only the outcome three years later, a million dollars later –

AN HON. MEMBER: One point one.

MS ROGERS: One point one million dollars. We also should take into account the cost of the

filibuster itself. I am sure once we start adding all that in –

AN HON. MEMBER: And the toner.

MS ROGERS: And the toner; my goodness, someone said here, the toner.

If we take into account all of that expense, what we do have now is an incredibly impressive piece of legislation. Again, whose victory is that? It is not the victory of this government, because the government had created this problem. The government went kicking and screaming and is being dragged into the twenty-first century.

The other victory we have is the victory on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who did get engaged. I do believe that because of the regressive policies of this government, because of what this government attempted to do, and they did it for a while, they did it for a few years, they got away with it for a few years but not for much longer than that, Mr. Speaker, because this new piece of legislation, Bill 1, is like a restart. It is like pushing a button to restart.

The reason that has happened is because it has given birth. I believe it has given birth to citizens' advocacy in this Province; something we sadly needed, something we desperately needed, that we needed to have citizens once again fully engaged in our democratic processes, and boy, did we see that engagement. Again, by way of letters, petitions, demonstrations, people in the gallery at 3:00 in the morning, at 4:00 in the morning saying to government, this is important and we will not stand for it.

Mr. Speaker, government did get away with it for a little while, but only for a little while. One of the wonderful things about our democratic process is that sometimes because of citizens' action we can push back, and that is what we have seen.

I had the honour on behalf of our caucus, on behalf of the NDP caucus, to present to the Independent Statutory Review Committee of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I would like to go over a little bit about some of the things we presented, which I think

we see now, which I know we now see in the new legislation and some of the issues that we raised during the filibuster

On this side of the House, we all worked really hard. When we were not actually in the House standing up speaking to issues we were behind the scenes, along with our staff, doing research, consulting with experts, consulting with academics in our own Province who care so passionately about our democratic process because they saw how Bill 29 was actually hindering our democratic process. We all saw that. It was clear. It was as clear as the nose on your face, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the Province saw it. It was undeniable, yet this government was talking about openness and transparency and Bill 29 was actually the antithesis of that. The way government worked to introduce this bill, we received it on a Friday and started debating in the House on a Monday – such a major, major piece of legislation. The way that government worked to introduce this bill and to have this bill debated in the House was also the antithesis to open, democratic, and accountable processes.

This was such a clear example of why it is so important that we had a committee structure, that we have a standing committee structure in this House. A democratic tool that is available for the use by this House of Assembly, but that is controlled at this point by this government as to whether or not we would avail of a very important democratic tool – they chose not to use it.

Had government chosen to use a parliamentary, democratic tool to look at Bill 29 before it came to the House, I doubt if it would have done as much harm to them as it has now. Because harm to government – we know that what happened is that it shook people's confidence in the democratic process and it definitely shook people's confidence in this government. Everywhere you went and after the debate, people talked about Bill 29, about the secrecy of this government, about the antidemocratic processes of this government – and government is wearing it; we know that. We know that they are wearing it.

The role of government is to lead and to be the voice of people and to ensure that our processes, how we deal with one another, how we live together, how we share our resources, reflect the wants and the needs of the people.

This government talks so much openness, transparency and consultation, but what does this government did was totally ignore that. They ignored what people had to say. They ignored what experts had to say. What I find very interesting right now, Mr. Speaker, is the about-face because how many times did the government side of the House during our filibuster criticize the Centre for Law and Democracy? How many times did they criticize the Centre for Law and Democracy?

MR. KING: Do you believe the experts?

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Justice keeps yelling out to me: Do I believe the experts – do I believe the experts? What I do believe is in a process where we consult with experts.

MR. KING: Do you believe them?

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Minister of Justice, probably because he says he is open and transparent and interested in consultation, that he might maybe stop heckling me right now and actually listen to what I have to say and then we can talk back and forth. Because, Mr. Speaker, that is what we are doing; we are debating.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask for protection.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

So, Mr. Speaker, government a number of times totally discredited the Centre for Law and Democracy when in fact what they are doing now is praising the fact that they are getting an A plus from the Centre for Law and Democracy;

whereas during the filibuster, the Centre for Law and Democracy were not fit. They were not fit for anything.

Let me read, Mr. Speaker, something from Hansard during the filibuster. A Member of the House of Assembly said, and I am quoting word for word, talking about the Centre for Law and Democracy, "This outfit, whoever they are, this two-bit outfit that was quoted from TV, who supposedly have some expertise in this stuff, rank us behind these countries I just mentioned."

That is what this government felt about the Centre for Law and Democracy, and incredibly they said, "This outfit, whoever they are, this two-bit outfit" I would like to think that maybe what we have is a government that is two-faced, because now what we have is a government who is totally praising what they once called the two-bit outfit.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, it took this government a long time, a long time –

MR. KING: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, on a point of order.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I accept the member's eagerness to condemn and criticize the policies of government, but I believe that there are Standing Orders and a code of ethics that clearly indicates that it would be unacceptable to indicate members here as being two-bit Members of the House of Assembly or part of government. I would ask her to retract that statement.

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

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

I never once called government two-bit. What I quoted was that government members were calling the Centre for Law and Democracy, as I quote, "this two-bit outfit". Never once did I call government a two-bit outfit.

I am aware of the sensitivities of government; I know that they are hypersensitive about this

particular issue, because this particular issue was so badly handled –so very, very badly handled. I can imagine how they would think that they would have been called a two-bit government. I can understand why they think that could have been said about them. However, Mr. Speaker, in fact –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, in fact, it was their words. Calling the Centre for Law and Democracy, which they are praising right now, a two-bit outfit. Imagine, a two-bit outfit.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

MS ROGERS: Shame.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on because I have a few more issues that I would really like to bring to the floor. In Bill 29, the Progressive Conservative government with their regressive policy broke its own commitment for greater transparency, accountability, and freedom of information which it once claimed was the hallmark of its government. They did the antithesis – the absolute antithesis – of what they said they believed in.

Mr. Speaker, government ignored us. Government ignored everybody on this side of the House. Government ignored academics who were experts in this area. Government ignored the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am sure government would be hard pressed to find anybody in the Province who felt that Bill 29 was a good thing. As a matter of fact, I would think that some of the political activity that we have seen in the past year would show the loss of confidence in government because of Bill 29.

We are here debating this bill because of the public outrage. The public was outraged by the measures that government tried to foist on what they assumed would be an indifferent public. They learned the hard way the public is not indifferent. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the public cares. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador care passionately about their democracy, about our democracy. The public of

Newfoundland and Labrador care passionately about the parliamentary procedure.

What has happened is that this government had a cynical view of the public. I had an optimistic view, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: I had an optimistic view and a respectful view of the public because we listened. We listened to what the public was saying. We listened to our academics. We listened to expertise from across the country.

It took the government losing so much face. That was the only thing that moved them forward and having this commission and inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, the former Premier Danny Williams, who many people can credit their own political careers because of him, quoted former American President Abraham Lincoln about his own government. He said, “Let the people know the truth and the country is safe.” Williams said his government would, “keep the people of this Province fully informed; there will be no secret documents, there will be no hidden agenda. If you and I know the facts then we will collectively decide the best course for our future.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not what this government did. Bill 29 was full of the provisions for keeping documents secret and tools for allowing government to hide agendas. Bill 1 reverses so much of the damage that was done by Bill 29. It is almost like pressing the restart button.

Mr. Speaker, whose victory is this? This is not a government victory. This is a victory that has been gained by the parliamentary experts in our Province, the academics. This is a victory that can be claimed by non-profit organizations, by groups who care about human rights, who care about democracy, and who care about their communities.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador made presentations. This is a victory on behalf

of all the people who made presentations to the Independent Statutory Review Committee. This is a victory on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; all those people who wrote letters, who wrote emails, who made phone calls, and who spoke to their MHA. This is a victory on behalf of our party who pushed and pushed and worked through the filibuster.

Mr. Speaker, three years later, \$1.1 million later

—

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: — Bill 1 is a victory, but it is not a victory that can be claimed by this government. It is a victory that can be claimed by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is a new dawning, Mr. Speaker. I believe that this Province is bursting at its seams with hope. It is the dawning of a new age of citizen activism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: I am happy that we have entered into that new age.

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

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly an honour today to rise and speak to Bill 1, An Act to Provide the Public with Access to Information and Protection of Privacy.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I agree with this legislation. It was not very long ago when this government came out with another piece of legislation. It was actually the legislation that this legislation is replacing, Bill 29, An Act to

Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

This piece of legislation we could not support and we did not support. When you look at what was in these two pieces of legislation if you put them up side by side, Mr. Speaker, you will find, just as the commission found, that there was a huge difference in the content.

When you look through Hansard in the spring of 2012 you will find that we on this side did not support this legislation, Bill 29. Most people in the Province did not support it. Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians did not support it to the point, Mr. Speaker, where I think we set a filibuster record in debate which eventually the government invoked closure on debate and it was taken off the table. Our leader stated at the time that our policy would be to repeal Bill 29.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I will support Bill 1. I think it is only fair that we take a look at what could have been done to avoid having to go through this legislation, changing it, getting a commission set up to go through the changes, and to look at what the savings could be to taxpayers of this Province, and I think just as important, the frustration the people of this Province went through with Bill 29.

I am happy to see that the government has finally made the right choice, our choice, by tabling Bill 1. Unfortunately, for all of us, as my hon. colleague from St. John's North stated yesterday, it cost over a million dollars of taxpayers' money. This was only three years ago, I think it was, Mr. Speaker. Nevertheless, it had to be done. Access to information can now, we are hoping, be made available to the people of the Province.

I heard ministers on the government side, Mr. Speaker, as well as members back in June 2012 stand up and support Bill 29. Reference was made over the last two days, I think, to the comments that ministers and members made back in June during the filibuster about how they supported the previous bill, in all relevance to what is being tabled here in this debate.

I also listened to members talk about how good a piece of legislation Bill 1 is, Mr. Speaker, over

the last two days – into today and a lot of comments from yesterday. I found it ironic that these very same members stood up and supported Bill 29 with equal enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, the Attorney General who brought in the legislation, I think, referred to it as a bit of housekeeping. I think that was the term that was used – a small bit of housekeeping.

Over the last few days, Mr. Speaker – and I reference the Member for Bonavista South saying that this legislation is vast, fair, engaging, and cost effective. To a certain point you want to agree with him, but does this mean that Bill 29, when he supported that was slow, unfair, and disengaging? I say at a cost of \$1.1 million to change the legislation I do not think it was very cost effective. I think it was very expensive.

The Member for Cape St. Francis, Mr. Speaker, spoke yesterday. He actually said that Bill 29 was a bad word to the general public, yet he supported it. The reason I say this is because we had so many people from districts across the way who came to us with their concerns because they knew they could not get their MHAs to speak out against Bill 29. That is why they came to us. There was a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who came to the Opposition with their concerns, because everyone on the government side supported Bill 29 and they could not get their frustrations tabled.

I heard the Minister of Wellness and Social Development, Advanced Education and Skills –

MS DEMPSTER: Seniors, Wellness.

MR. EDMUNDS: Seniors, Wellness; I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Seniors, Wellness, Advanced Education and Skills. He said yesterday they moved to a new place. I am hoping he has referenced the transition from Bill 29 to Bill 1. He said that the Centre for Law and Democracy said this is a piece of world-class legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a short time ago that very same organization, in reference to Bill 29, said it was a dangerously undemocratic move. The same organization coming out in reference to

Bill 29, and I must say that the minister also supported, Mr. Speaker.

I am not going to take up a lot of time, Mr. Speaker. I am going to clue up because having said you are going to support it, you need not beleaguer the point, but I would like to reference the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker – and I listened to him intently – I actually do not think he spoke at all to Bill 1 itself. I do not think he did. He spoke all around Bill 1, but he did say we understand what we are voting for. That he did say.

So, do I assume – and I am asking a question here, Mr. Speaker. Can I assume, in reference to Bill 29, that the minister did not know what he was voting for? They voted on every amendment we put in, all six of them I think.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that after many, many speeches, many, many votes and over \$1 million dollars, and I am assuming gallons of toner, we are here to correct the legislation and to be on the verge of implementing legislation that will finally benefit the people of our great Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I always do, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say as I rise in this hon. House here today, I would like to thank the great people of the District of Lake Melville always for their continued support, for standing by me. It is a pleasure and an honour to be part of this process here, Mr. Speaker.

We are listening to people on both sides of the House talk about where we were, where we have come to, Mr. Speaker. I would like to see a little more focus on where we are headed as opposed to where we have been, obviously. We have

heard some commentary from this side of the House, that side of the House.

The Member for St. John's Centre stood up and talked about the filibuster. We all remember that filibuster. For the new people who are here, it was quite an experience. I was certainly there, some long hours, some heated debate. I saw a little bit of heckling here and there, a little bit of catcalling. It was back and forth, back and forth, contentious, then a little dull, and then back and forth. It was heated and cooled, heated and cooled.

When you look at the filibuster and what we accomplished by going through that process and by arriving at a point where we are right now today with Bill 1, Mr. Speaker, looking at ATIPPA, we are doing our jobs. It is as simple as that.

Anybody out there in the public right now, they have to vote in their constituency for people who are putting themselves out there to come in here and do just what we are doing right here, which is engage in the democratic process. What we see here, we see government brings forth legislation. We see the Opposition and Third Party, they are going to hammer that. They are going to try and make amendments. Some will stick, some will not stick.

The bottom line here is this, they get their say. They are representing the people. We have parties, it is a partisan system, and everybody knows that. You are going to see that banter, but this is the process. The process is simply this, and we heard the Member for St. John's Centre reference that this was – and I love the flair, I love the fire, I love the drama, I do – a victory for democracy, a victory for all those who wrote letters in. Sure, that is all well and fine, but what we are doing here is engaging in a process, which by way we do our jobs and we end up having legislation that is the absolute best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. That is what this is about.

Yes, there was a filibuster. Yes, there were amendments proposed, banter back and forth. The long and short of it is this, we are arriving here in this Legislature today and eventually we are going to vote on this. It is great to see some

people over across the way automatically say that I am going to support this.

To quote the member loosely there from Torngat Mountains: I have already said I am voting for this, so why beleaguer the point. There is no point to keep going on and on about it. I agree wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker. I think when we hear people – and again, I will drop a name here. This guy Michael Karanicolas from the Centre for Law and Democracy, said: we are going to arrive at a place which not only will we have the best legislation and the best policies here, not only in terms of being a Province of Canada, but perhaps anywhere, perhaps any jurisdiction in the world, Mr. Speaker.

Here we are, we have people across the way saying this. They are going to support this. This is going to make us the best we have ever been in terms of what legislation we have in regard to access to information and privacy, Mr. Speaker. We have heard people say oh, well, no point in going on and on about it, we are going to support that. I agree, we are going to end up with an incredible piece of legislation here which is what we should have.

This is the process. This is what we have to do on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at all times, which is put things through the wringer. It is the function of Opposition to come back against us. It is the function of government to consider amendments and push forward eventually ending up – and I can say this with all confidence, every single member, regardless of political stripe, want to see the absolute best for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If that means an investment in infrastructure, a piece of legislation, a policy, a regulation, whatever that happens to be, Mr. Speaker, I know we are all going to arrive at the same place.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we have had some discussion about the cost of this. When it comes to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and no matter what your motives are, if you are part of a group, if it is personal, whatever the need for that information is, the ability to go out and get it, it is hard to put a price on that. In order for people who engage and do business with the government or are in another organization, they could be – you know we are talking about

government agencies as well. Maybe not in the public service proper, in the core if you will, but they have to know that their privacy is going to be protected. It is hard to put a price on that I say too.

So, yes, we always look at what it is going to cost. People are saying yes, well this is – oh, they are waving the Bill 1 around, this is the million-dollar bill. The fact of the matter is that our particular – and we all know how this came to be. We got our heat from Bill 29, from the people out there in the public. We got our heat. That comes back then and we had a Premier on this side of the House who says, do you know what? Let's put a committee in there. Then our current Premier says, without a doubt, whatever this committee comes back with – these ninety-odd recommendations that came back – we are going to implement them in their entirety, which says we are open to doing what is best for the people of the Province.

We talk about the price tag that was referenced on the other side by several members of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. The people at home need to know one thing; it was not only the amendments that were included in Bill 29 that we are looking at, but all aspects in total of the legislation. One piece of legislation affects the other. In some cases subordinate legislation has to be looked at.

A great exercise which will end up, as everybody is agreeing to, producing the greatest piece of legislation in regard to ATIPPA that we have had up to this point in time and make us leaders worldwide in this. Everybody is saying they are agreeing with it, yet we are still going to go back and we are going to banter, and that is fine too. That is all part of that. When it comes to transparency that is what we are about: protecting privacy. There has to be an ability, and what we are going to do through this whole process – we will fight it out in the Legislature all we want, but when it comes down and we actually implement this, it will be user friendly to the point where people who need that information, who want that information, can get out there and access that information.

In speaking to that, we know where we are all headed. I think we can all say with some level of confidence, we know we brought the

legislation in here; we are going to want this to be pushed forward. We are going to say yes, they are going to say yes, and we have heard the Third Party say they are going to say yes.

In anticipation of that, Mr. Speaker, we have made a few moves in terms of elimination of application fees, the increasing of hours – the enhancement of the duties to assist applicants in looking for that information. So what that says in a nutshell is simply this: It does not matter what walk of life you come from, it does not matter what your financial means allow you to do, you can engage and you can get information that you are after, regardless of your financial circumstances in life.

That just increases the level of open access to government, to government information, to different bodies within government, Mr. Speaker. Saying that, all the time while we consider taking away the fees and increasing the hours and doing that stuff, we also made sure that the identity of these applicants was going to be at the forefront in terms of protecting the individuals who look for information.

This all comes down, if you look at the whole gamut of what we are doing here, in terms of the implementation plan that has to come with this, you have some heavy-duty training that has to take place so that when people come looking for this information you are going to know that they are being respected and the co-ordinators within, whether it is a government department, some type of public body or agency, they know, as the people who decide which information gets out there, how to proceed with these requests and make sure that everybody not only is being treated fairly, given the time that they need in order to look at whatever piece of information they happen to be after, but they are also respected, too, in terms of their identity as well.

So with that, I will not belabour the point either, because I agree with the Member for Torngat Mountains; I think this is a slam dunk in terms of where we are headed. We are doing what is best for the people of the Province, and we are fulfilling the function of the Legislature, which is to put something to the floor, to consider it – and the Opposition played a role in that too. They proposed amendments, they give their critique on it, everybody goes out into the

media, and the media then put their take on it and put that out to the people.

Yet, the process is working, Mr. Speaker, because we are right back here today. We are on the cusp, if you will – depending on how much the people on the opposite side of the House want to live in the past, and they want to get their pound of flesh, and they want to throw barbs back and forth. That is all fine. The bottom line here is that it is our duty, our responsibility, as members of this Legislature, to end up in the very best place we possibly can with our legislation for the people of the Province.

I wholeheartedly believe we are doing that. I think we are making changes right now in the interim to make sure that this transition is going to be smooth. We can all look back into the past and focus on that. You guys can have your rhetoric and your spin and do whatever you like, but the bottom line is this: We will be world leaders once again in another area – this one just happens to be ATIPPA type of legislation.

We are doing our job here. We have no problem moving with forward on this side of the House. I simply hope that all other members of the Legislature on the other side of the House simply want to do what is right by the people of the Province. Let's get this done. Let's get this pushed through. Let's get this to a vote, Mr. Speaker, and know that we will be respected around the world for what we are going to be doing with this piece of legislation. That this is a positive news story for everybody who is either involved in looking for information in this Province or they are part of a government body that is going to be having their information accessed as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. Once again, thanks for the opportunity to speak. It is my pleasure and honour to get up on behalf of the people of Lake Melville every time I do so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to make a few comments here on this bill today. I do not think I will take my full time, but I just want to make a few brief comments.

AN HON. MEMBER: Take it all.

MR. REID: We will see how it goes.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we put this bill into context of where it came from and how we arrived at this point and exactly how this all came about. I think it is important that we review where things went and where things came from. I wanted to look a little bit at where this legislation came from.

Mr. Speaker, the PCs claim the credit for having brought forward these changes, but, in fact, it is legislated that they have a review and the Committee brought forward these changes. So the government really did not have very much to do with bringing forward these changes. They were just the messenger, the courier, who brought it to the House. They have not changed the legislation that was presented by the Committee at all.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. REID: Yes, maybe they should try that more often.

AN HON. MEMBER: Contract it out.

MR. REID: Contract things out.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to go back and look at Bill 29. It is important to look at the response to Bill 29 in this House at the time. Democracy Watch – and it is interesting that some of the members opposite are quoting Democracy Watch now, what they said about this current piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. What did they say about Bill 29? What did they say? It is important to note that Democracy Watch is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, Canada's leading citizens' group advocating democratic reform, government accountability, and corporate responsibility. They are hardly a two-bit organization.

Mr. Conacher, in a CBC interview, said: It is a dangerous and undemocratic move that reduces access to public information that they paid to have a right to know. That is what Democracy Watch and Duff Conacher said at that time about Bill 29. It is important to hear that.

Mr. Speaker, he said as well: It goes against what the trend is across the country which is towards more openness. Instead this is towards more excessive unjustifiable and undemocratic secrecy. He was not in favour of Bill 29. He goes on to say essentially it is in every area, there are more loopholes, more exemptions to disclosure of information and they weaken enforcement as well. When you do this, it is a double whammy and it leads to excessive, unjustifiable secrecy at a greater level. That is what Democracy said about Bill 29, Mr. Speaker, at the time.

It is interesting again to note that the members are now sort of praising Democracy Watch and what they have to say. It is interesting to hear. Mr. Conacher went on to say everyone should care about this piece of legislation he was talking about. Secrecy is a recipe for corruption, waste, and abuse of the public. The strongest governments have weaknesses, and these weaknesses and loopholes are always exploited when government wants to hide abuse, waste, and corruption. If you do not have a strong, open government law and enforcement system, with high penalties for keeping excessive secrets, you will have bad governments that will abuse people and communities and waste people's money. Democracy Watch was very much against what the government at that time was doing with Bill 29.

Other groups such as the Canadian Association of Journalists also spoke out about this legislation, Mr. Speaker. Newspapers Canada does an annual audit of freedom of information. They noted that ours was the worst, most regressive piece of legislation. It is interesting to see the reaction to Bill 29.

Mr. Speaker, the government at the time sort of hoped that people would not care about an issue so inconsequential or immediate to their everyday lives as freedom of information. They thought it was too abstract for people to get engaged in and care about.

Mr. Speaker, they were somewhat surprised when they started to find that the galleries were full in this House as they debated this legislation. They were surprised to find that people were talking about this in their daily lives. It became a real issue, but they pushed forward anyway in the face of this public opposition to this bill. They pushed forward anyway.

Because they could, because they were a majority government, because they had the powers that a majority government had, they thought they did not have to listen to the public. They thought the public would forget about it and they could just continue on and move on to another issue. It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the public rose up and opposed Bill 29 at the time.

While everyone in the Province was speaking out against Bill 29, speaking against it, Mr. Speaker, what were members of the government opposite saying? What were they saying? What kind of things were they saying about the legislation? It is important to know and to review some of the things they were saying about the legislation as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice at the time, talking about Bill 29 said, "The cornerstone of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act is openness, transparency, and accountability, and our government is committed to this important piece of legislation." They were committed to that important piece of legislation.

That is the piece of legislation that everyone now recognizes needed to be replaced by this new bill that we are debating today. It is important to see what some of the other people – Mr. Speaker, one of the members who is maybe most honest in his expression of the government's view on this Bill 29 was the Member for Gander.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. REID: The Member for Gander. Yes, he was one of the most honest people when it came to expressing the government's view on this.

What he said at the time, he argued that the public did not have a right to know, actually. He was expressing the government's view, I assume, at this time. He said: everything would be on the table except every day scrutiny, not only of the Opposition but scrutiny of the government, scrutiny of the public at large, and scrutiny of the media. Is that the way a democratic society works, he asked.

I say to the hon. member that this is not the way a democratic society works. So he was speaking out against access to information and excessive access to information, Mr. Speaker. I think he was really expressing the views of the government at that time. It is important to note that as well.

It is interesting as well that others of the government at the time talked about the difficulty of keeping track of all these – really the bother that it would be if people had the right to ask for information and get it, the bother for government to go and look for information about things that were happening in government. What a bother that would be.

Several members talked about the countless number of Access to Information requests somehow blocking up government. They talked about numbers in the thousands. The current Premier talked about and I quote from him, he said: they make countless requests for information, Mr. Speaker.

One of the problems they had with access to information is that people might want to actually access information. It was a bit of an issue there. CBC sort of did a little bit of investigating on this. What they found out was that in 2010-2011 there were 581 requests for the full year. Then the next year there were 579 requests under freedom of information legislation. So it was hardly excessive at all, Mr. Speaker. It is important to note some of the comments that were being made by members opposite at that time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what did the Liberal Party do at this time? What did the Liberal Party, what did the NDP, and what did the Opposition do? What did the other people in this House do at that time? They spoke out against this bill. They raised amendments to this bill. They used

all the options that were available to them to try to stop this piece of legislation, to slow it down so people would have time to think about what was actually happening, to give the government an opportunity to rethink what they were doing. Did they rethink it?

AN HON. MEMBER: Three years later.

MR. REID: Three years later. Yes, it was one of the longest debates in this Legislature. Government just pushed forward. In fact, they did not just allow the debate to go on, Mr. Speaker. What they did was they used the most dramatic instruments they had. They used closure to close down the debate. They brought in closure to stifle the debate, to stifle the Opposition, to close them down in this House.

There is a saying about House operations. It is said that Oppositions have a chance to have their say, but then governments get their way. So, Oppositions have a chance to speak out against a piece of legislation, but the government, if they are a majority government, eventually gets their way. One of the ways of determining how democratic a government is, Mr. Speaker, is how much of a say do they let the Opposition have. How much of a say do they let the Opposition have on legislation.

There are a number of things that a government can use to close down debate in the Legislature. One is closure, which they do not allow any more amendments – when everyone has a chance to speak, they do not allow any other amendments, and they close it down. That is the instrument they used to close down, to stifle the debate on this piece of legislation.

That is what happened. That is how cocky they were. That is what they did, Mr. Speaker. People should remember that when we look at what is happening here today.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to make is about the review committee. Government seems to be taking credit for this piece of legislation, but really government did not write this piece of legislation. They are taking credit for it – how great it is; it is wonderful.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who wrote it?

MR. REID: It was written by the Committee. Did they appoint this Committee just out of some sense of we think we have made a mistake? I have not heard too many people over there even say we have made a mistake. Has anyone actually said we have made a mistake with Bill 29? No one said we have made a mistake over there.

AN HON. MEMBER: I do not think so. I did not hear it.

MR. REID: No, I did not hear it. Usually there is some kind of truth and reconciliation. Usually the first part is saying I am sorry; I made a mistake. That is usually the first part of winning your way back into respectability; but, no, they have not said that. Maybe the next speaker will get up and say we are sorry. Maybe when the minister closes debate, he will get up and say we are sorry. I do not know. I am hopeful.

AN HON. MEMBER: Maybe he will say whoops.

MR. REID: Yes, even whoops would do. Even if he could say whoops, sorry, then we could maybe move on but I do not know.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee came forward with this bill and it is here in this House and we are dealing with it now. Three years later, after people have been denied information, they have obstructed the type of political debate that we have on important issues in this Province for three years with their draconian Bill 29 that no one agreed with, and they have not even said they are sorry.

I am going to conclude now, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that this story has a happy ending, I guess. This story has a happy ending. It has a happy ending not because of anything that government has done or not because of anything the government has said; it has a happy ending because the people stood up and said enough. They finally forced the government to come back and bring in a better piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

This story has a happy ending, but it will be interesting to see if the attitude is there, which is really needed, the attitude of openness and transparency when it comes to a political debate

that we need so much in this Province, Mr. Speaker. That is why freedom of information and access to information is so important, because we should have a good political debate. People who pay to have studies done and people who pay employees' wages through their tax dollars should have a right to information that the government has so they can have a good debate and participate in a good debate.

Mr. Speaker, those are the points I wanted to make.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker; those are my comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand in my place on behalf of the people of the beautiful District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. Everyone has been mentioning their districts here, so I thought I would follow suit and do the same, Mr. Speaker.

I was not around for the Bill 29 debate, but I have not heard more about any other bill than Bill 29. That was back in 2012. I have been here two years and here we are still talking about one of the longest filibusters in the history of the House.

The Member for Lake Melville got up a few moments ago. He said today we should be talking about where we are going. I think it was *Alice in Wonderland* or someone who said we cannot know where we are going unless we know where we came from. That is why, Mr. Speaker, even though we support Bill 1 going forward today, we have a responsibility to talk about what happened and the expensive mistakes that happened around Bill 29. That is why even though we support it, we are not just going to stand and vote, we are going to stand and have our say and we are going to remind the people.

It is hard to believe. I have sat the last couple of days and I have listened to members across the way get up and act cocky and quotes – I could

hardly believe it, Mr. Speaker. If they were not going to stand and say we are sorry that we have cost the taxpayers of this Province over a million dollars, stay sitting down for shame's sake.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: I was thinking as I walked down this morning – we go to a meeting every morning in our caucus room. When we are going down the stairs, Mr. Speaker, there are windows there to the playground of the children who are cared for here on site. I could not help but think, as I looked at all those little children, that is why we have to get this right. That is why we cannot continue to make million-dollar mistakes on pieces of legislation. I do not know how many pieces of legislation goes through the House in the run of a year, but I can tell you now if everyone cost a million dollars we would be in a sadder state than the serious fiscal state that we are already in.

Mr. Speaker, I have to mention the empty promises of the PC Blue Book. When I look at it, I think it is no wonder that the public is so skeptical of politicians – it is no wonder. I quote him often, my colleague for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, when he talks about it is the people's House and it is the people's money. It would do us all good to remind ourselves on a regular basis that is why we are here; we work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are not in the House to play house, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 29 was a very, very expensive mistake. Our leader is on record, he said many times, that the first order of business for a Liberal government would be to repeal Bill 29. They knew that and one by one by one, like my colleague for St. John's North says, you can hear the beep, beep, beep; the bus is backing up. As we put things forward, slowly we are seeing them implement the changes, but some of them are very expensive ones like this.

My colleague for Torngat, one time, said it is hard to govern from this side, but we are doing the best we can. We could list a lot of examples of items that we have put forward and that they are beginning to listen –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: They are beginning to listen a little bit too late, Mr. Speaker. Twelve years in, and now they are saying that they are starting to listen.

In the Blue Book, it was quoted that information belongs in the public domain. It was Williams I think who said it would significant to completely ignore recommendations of citizens, and a PC government will proclaim new Freedom of Information legislation which will include Cabinet documents. What did we actually see in reality, Mr. Speaker? We saw a draconian piece of legislation, the most careless, the most ruthless probably that the Province have ever seen.

I could cite numerous examples where reports were not released within the thirty days that they had promised, and some that had never been released at all. The infrastructure report, Mr. Speaker, denied access to documents of \$5 billion infrastructure program – \$5 billion – and the report was not released. When asked about it, the former Premier said government had nothing to hide. She talked about how Loveys had alternate ways of finding the information, but she could not suggest any. She could not suggest any of the ways that he had in finding alternate information.

Mr. Speaker, I will go back to Bill 1 that we are debating here today. Wangersky in *The Telegram* in 2008 said, "Transparency and accountability are like an exercise program: practice conscientiously, or it'll end up doing you no good ..."

Mr. Speaker, I thought, what a lot of truth in that statement. It reminded me of when you buy a treadmill. Some people buy a treadmill and they think well, I am going to lose all kinds of weight now because I bought a treadmill, and they stick it in the corner. That is what this government reminds me of, they think they are fooling the people because they are saying we bought the treadmill. We bought the treadmill, so now the results are going to come. Mr. Speaker, clearly, that has not happened.

Now they are saying, listen to us. We did not do it right the past twelve years. We did not listen, despite the public outcry during the Bill 29 debate, seventy hours of debate. The House

Leader said we are going to give you all the time in the world, this is important. We are going to give you all the time in the world. What did they do? We were talking about something as important as Bill 29 and they shut down debate and invoked closure. That is what they did. Here we are now, three years later we are back and we are discussing Bill 29 again because they did not do it right the first time, I say, Mr. Speaker.

At the time the Bill 29 debate was going ahead, government said no one cares. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people out there who do not follow politics on a day-to-day basis. They have their work, they have their family, and they have their lives. You know, I could not help but think about that quote: you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

People saw what was happening. They got involved. They began to listen, Mr. Speaker, as the debate went on. I am glad that the people spoke up. I am glad the people said we have a concern about what is about to happen here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: Because we had a government that was elected by the people to represent the people, and clearly they never listened. That is why we are here in April, 2015, discussing a bill that was rammed through in 2012.

I could not help, Mr. Speaker, as I sat here thinking about Muskrat Falls and all of the headache, the multi-billion dollar project, and our grandchildren, how they are going to pay for that. Bill 29 was rammed through in time to sanction Muskrat Falls. I truly believe that. That was a big reason why Bill 29 was rammed through, so they could sanction Muskrat Falls and they could cover everything up. The only two independent reviews, the Joint Review Panel and the PUB, were not even given time, Mr. Speaker, to do their work, to say whether Muskrat Falls was the least-cost option or not. That is a conversation for a whole other day.

Mr. Speaker, we see that at the time when government said no one cares, we know the public was calling. Emails were coming in like never before. We have to give credit where credit is due. As I said earlier, they may not follow everything that goes on, but they know when something does not look right, when something smells wrong. Here we are a million dollars later.

CBC did a poll at the time. Media was beginning to weigh in on this. Media likes to follow what happens here in the House of Assembly. They have a job to do. They like to report to the people. They were concerned about things being covered up and information that they would not have.

CBC conducted a poll when the debate was going on. There was concern that government wanted to shut it down, stifle people, just like was common of this government. We will no longer listen, we will no longer allow the Opposition to have a say, to debate this in a healthy democratic way.

CBC put out a poll and said government plans to invoke closure. Do you know what the results were? Mr. Speaker, 57 per cent said keep the debate going. Eighty per cent said they supported the filibuster – 80 per cent of the public who responded in that poll – and 69 per cent said they did not support any changes at all.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the former Liberals who made changes to this piece of legislation that had not been changed for a couple of decades, Kelvin Parsons and Roger Grimes. The work was done, Mr. Speaker.

As I was doing a little bit of research, Mr. Speaker, when I decided I would get up and speak on Bill 29, everywhere I looked anything connected with Bill 29 was overwhelming negative comments. I could not find anywhere where there was support for Bill 29, which just amazed me. It amazed me that it ever got through.

It gained national coverage. The bill we are discussing here today at the time the filibuster was happening gained national coverage. Many groups were advocating, Mr. Speaker.

When I think about Premier Marshall, the former Premier, yes, he was a fine man. Mr. Speaker, I was surprised that even a man of his calibre would refer to it as a bit of housekeeping. I am sure now if you were to ask former Premier Marshall, he could not agree that it was a bit of housekeeping.

Our current Premier, Mr. Speaker, said this is not a bad piece of legislation, it is a good piece of legislation. I wonder what he would stand here today and say. Is he saying now it is still a good piece of legislation but we had to listen to the people, or would he actually stand and say the people were right, this was bad legislation.

My colleague for St. George's – Stephenville East mentioned earlier, not one person got up on that side, not one person, and said we are sorry to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we made a mistake. We did not listen. We plowed ahead. We ignored not one road sign telling us there was something wrong, not another road side, but seventy hours of road signs, and media coverage, provincial coverage, national coverage. As a result of that, it has cost the taxpayers of this Province a million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I represent a district with lots of issues. We just celebrated in a number of communities volunteer week. It is amazing what some of the volunteers do in my community. They often come to me and say, can you help push this through, \$5,000. If we could get \$10,000 for this certain program we could run programs in our community for a year.

When I think about the wastage that happens like this, that should never be. It just bothers me when I think about what a million dollars could do, and over and over again. People do not listen when they are elected to represent the people and to work for the people. You do not listen.

The people have the final say. That is what we see here with Bill 29, the people had the final say. Just like when we go to the polls very soon, Mr. Speaker, we are going to see the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, they are going to have the final say again when they put the X on the paper.

Mr. Speaker, closure was imposed after seventy hours of debate – imagine. Here we are today, flip-flop, flip-flop. I looked back through a number of the press releases that our leader put out. He had so much concern, but because the numbers are more when they voted to shut down, the House shut down. At the time when this was being debated our leader said: proposed changes are severe and harmful to democracy. We proposed on this side a number of amendments, but they refused and they wanted to bring in those sweeping changes.

My colleague for St. Barbe at the time said: Why do we still have to fight so hard to get government to do the right thing? I thought about that, Mr. Speaker. I do not know how it seems so clear to us when you are listening to the hundreds and the thousands of people giving you a message and you ignore that. My colleague for St. Barbe said: Why do we still have to fight so hard? Open your ears, listen to the radio, read your emails, the people know.

At the time this was going on our leader called it a national embarrassment. Here we are three years later still talking about it. Mr. Speaker, our leader said it is ironic that government shut down debate and forced a vote on access to information. The irony is not lost on the people; shutting down debate and forcing a vote on access to information.

In my closing, I would like to sum up a few things of what I see around Bill 29 and this government. They promised openness, Mr. Speaker, but they provided closure. They promised transparency and buried information where the people could not see it – buried it. They promised accountability. We heard it over and over and over, but they passed legislation that made it impossible to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, yes, we are moving forward into a new age. Many around me will know there is a quote that I love. It says: There is a reason why your windshield is bigger than your rear-view mirror. That is because we are moving forward and we are looking forward.

We have to glance back from time to time to learn valuable lessons. Bill 29 was a very expensive lesson. I hope we have learned from that. I hope we do not have to stand here too

many more times and debate issues and legislation similar to this that is repealed, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased, along with my colleagues here today, to say I support Bill 1. I think it is a fantastic example again of where the people know what is happening. The people deserve the truth. The people deserve openness, honesty, transparency, and accountability. I know that is what myself and my colleagues work every day on this side of the House to give them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just stand to have a few words on Bill 1, the repeal of Bill 29. I do not know if anybody in this House finds it ironic. Here we are bringing in a bill for openness and transparency, and here is the government forcing night sessions so they can get it out of the House of Assembly. I mean there is something ironic about that.

Here they are saying mea culpa, we cost the Province a million dollars. We made mistakes. We tried to hide everything from government, but now we want to rush everything through so that we can get it done. Do you notice, Mr. Speaker? I do not know if anybody noticed here the last three or four times, not one of those members will stand up and speak to this bill.

They will not even stand up and speak to this bill. Can you imagine that? What do you think of that, Mr. Speaker, having a government bringing in a bill and not even putting up members to speak to the bill? That just says a lot about this. That just says a lot about this bill. That says a lot about the actual embarrassment of this government and what they put the people of the Province through.

It is fine. I thank Clyde Wells and the committee for doing their review. It was a great review. It was a thorough review. They brought

in a lot of great recommendations. We will support this bill, but again we have to explain the process of how this came through because there are going to be other times. Like I said earlier, this cost the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the taxpayers, over a million dollars – \$1 million dollars excess, more than that actually.

I just look back at some of the things you could do with a million dollars; water and sewer, some roadwork –

AN HON. MEMBER: The Family Violence Intervention Court.

MR. JOYCE: The Family Violence Court, Mr. Speaker. We look at some people who may need home care –

AN HON. MEMBER: A seniors' advocate.

MR. JOYCE: – seniors' advocate. Yet that just gets pushed off. They will not even put anyone up there on the other side to speak about the waste of money.

I remember when the Premier stood up and talked about the deficit that they were having. They were saying everything is on the table, but they can go out and waste over a million dollars – absolute waste, over a million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I was a part of this debate. I will tell you the quote that I made and the biggest winners of that debate on Bill 29 that the government rammed through. I was part of debate and I was here the whole time. We went through it. Sometimes it got heated and other things. You know the biggest winners of Bill 29 were whoever owned shares in Sharpie, the black markers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Those are the biggest winner of this. I said that then, Mr. Speaker. I was scoffed at. I was mocked. I did not know what I was talking about. It was the best piece of legislation in this Province this government ever brought through.

Mr. Speaker, day after day after day they tried to wear us down. We even took shifts. There were

six of us here; we even took shifts. We even took shifts to make sure that this did not get through until people and other groups got to really look at it. We got scoffed at for doing our job. Actually we were berated, wasting money.

We were told we were wasting money keeping the House of Assembly open in the night times over Bill 29. Mr. Speaker, guess what? They changed their mind. Public pressure from all the groups outside that my colleagues mentioned; the public pressure.

This has nothing to do with conscience. This has nothing to do with wanting to be open and accountable. This has all to do with public pressure. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing, I was proud to stand up with the Liberal Opposition and put in all those amendments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I was proud that we stood tall and we said there are major problems here. I was proud that Dwight Ball, the Leader of the Opposition – sorry, Mr. Speaker – stood tall, kept up the filibuster until this government brought in closure on an openness and accountability bill. Guess what? I was out in that room I guess about 5:00 in the morning when they brought in closure. We got it done.

Do you know the first thing Dwight Ball, the Leader of the Opposition did – I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what he did? He put out a press release saying we are going to repeal Bill 29 the first move that we get in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: That is the first thing he did. I was proud to be part of it. I know all of our caucus were proud that we all stood tall together, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale and the Member for Lake Melville saying stop going back in the past, let's move forward.

MR. RUSSELL: Absolutely.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Lake Melville said, absolutely.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you really mean it, the Member for Lake Melville who said, absolutely, and the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale – when they gave the Speech from the Throne, the Premier started criticizing the Liberals from 2003. Here in my next fourteen minutes, stand up and say: Premier, do not go in the past. Do not go back, go forward.

Here is your opportunity if you really mean it. If you do not, don't get up here with rhetoric and try to embarrass us. Here is your opportunity. I have fourteen minutes left. Stand up – they are both sitting in their seats – and say: Premier Davis you were wrong. Do not go back, go forward. Here is your opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: They can sit and smile, Mr. Speaker, but let me tell you when they want to look over here and try to be condescending on the people on this side – if you really mean it, do it to everybody in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, like I said before, they do not have the intestinal fortitude or the courage –

MR. A. PARSONS: He said guts today.

MR. JOYCE: – or what we call guts in Newfoundland and Labrador, to tell the Premier what you are doing is wrong. He can tell us, though. So you keep your position now, but do not go telling me that I should have look in the past when you do not have the guts to tell the Premier do not look back in the past. I just got that off my chest because I hate people being condescending on us.

Mr. Speaker, when they were forced to bring this Bill 1 in, when they were forced by the general public – and the Leader of the Opposition vowed to bring it in – they were out in the media. What a spin was given about the Opposition.

I will just go back, Mr. Speaker, even before Bill 29. I am going to bring something up in this House – and I know there are some people who are going to say not this again – the hospital in

Corner Brook. Do you know how long it took me to get the Stantec report for the hospital people in Corner Brook?

AN HON. MEMBER: How long?

MR. JOYCE: Almost four months under Bill 29. The other reports, they even put in extensions after extensions after extensions because there is some third party, the contractor, the person who actually did the report.

Mr. Speaker, people expect me to stand here and say oh, let's forget about all that. When the people out in Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland and Labrador have been fighting for the hospital since it was committed in 2007, eight years ago, they have been fighting for it, and they expect me – oh, that is all right; do not worry about Bill 29. Do not worry about the past. The people in Corner Brook could have waited a few more years. That is just one big example, major example, Bill 29 – why the pressure was put on this government to repeal Bill 29.

There are three or four ministers over there; I can look at three of them. The member – I do not even know – for Whitbourne.

AN HON. MEMBER: Harbour Main.

MR. JOYCE: Harbour Main, Whitbourne, Mr. Speaker, and I said it before – Harbour Main, Whitbourne.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, Harbour Main.

MR. JOYCE: Harbour Main, sorry. He was the only member, when I had when I got in Estimates, who was honest to the people of Western Newfoundland. Forget Bill 29, the rest – even the Premier who was Minister of Transportation and Works sat there. I stood up because I asked him in Estimates for a copy of the report.

He got up and the Premier said to me: I did not say that. I said: Yes, in Estimates. I did not, he said. Estimates, he said, is not even transcribed yet. So I said is that right now, trying to embarrass me and the people of Western Newfoundland. What did I do? I went down and got an audiotape, got it transcribed, got up

and tabled it. Guess what? We got the report after embarrassing the Premier who was the Minister of Transportation and Works.

That is the kind of stuff that people – this is not about me. This is not about the Opposition. This is about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. When you want to talk about the health care of people of Newfoundland and Labrador – and I happen to be the one elected for the Bay of Islands to speak on their behalf and they are coming to me and saying let's get the information and I go to government and I cannot get the information. You cannot get the information because you are stonewalled. You are actually stonewalled.

Mr. Speaker, I will give you lots of good examples. I will give you another one. I put in a freedom of information, and I have to say whoever was on the government they did pretty good. They gave me back fifty-three pages and not one word was given to me without the blackout, not one word on fifty-three – even the pages were blacked out and I had to count the pages. Even that was blacked out because they did not know how many pages were in the report. I actually had to count them myself.

That is the kind of stuff that this government was forced into. Actually forced into, Mr. Speaker, to the people. I can see why no one wants to stand up over there to be embarrassed by what they put the people of the Province through. I can see why now they want to say let's go all night now so we get this out of the House of Assembly, so we can get this done.

I am willing to bet, from what I am saying here now, they are going to start putting speakers up. I am willing to bet they are going to start putting speakers up, because the embarrassment is getting too loud. Because if you put the people of Newfoundland and Labrador through what they had for a number of times, telling them we know what is best for you – we know what is best.

Mr. Speaker, a government needs to be open, transparent, and accountable. We always said that, and you have to keep the privacy of individuals. There is absolutely no problem with that; you have to have privacy of the people. When you try to have the openness and

be transparent, you cannot give the facade that you are doing it. You cannot just do that. Under Bill 29 that is exactly what they were doing: Telling all the people of the Province do not mind the Opposition, do not mind all the other groups, do not mind the reporters that were around saying all this, they are just looking to get more information and print more stories. We know what is best, Mr. Speaker, without listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I find it strange that when we get into a debate like Bill 29 and you put in amendments that this Legislature is supposed to work properly and when we put in amendments we get scoffed at and we get laughed at. There was not one amendment – and I have a list of them here – not one amendment that was accepted by government. Do you know why? Because Bill 29 was perfect. Bill 29 did not need any amendments. It was the best piece of legislation that was brought in this House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. That is what this government said: the best piece of legislation. There was no need – how can you make something more perfect than it is already? How can you do, Mr. Speaker? How can Opposition or how can the general public know something more than this government?

I tell you another part of this Bill 29. I really feel, not only as Opposition, but as people of Newfoundland and Labrador, this is one that I think made the people of Newfoundland and Labrador suffer. What happened here – and part of this Bill 29 that the government brought in either overtly or quietly, however they did it, is when myself, as a member of the Legislature doing some inquiries – get this; if I had to do an inquiry on behalf of a constituent, I had to go to a minister's EA to get an answer. Here is the ironic part about that; that was one of the most degrading things this government ever brought in as part of Bill 29.

Guess what? Here is the ironic fact, and here is the degrading fact for the people that we are elected to serve: If I was making an inquiry on behalf of a constituent to the department, I have to sign a declaration and this person has to sign it saying I give you access to my information. Mr. Speaker, you are well aware of that; you had to do it, probably. The minute we take it and

make an inquiry, the EA to the minister does not need to sign any declaration. They can take all the private information they want, because this government said no, we are going to have control of everything.

Now is that a double standard? What do you think, Mr. Speaker? Do you think that is a double standard? Honestly –

AN HON. MEMBER: Sounds like Stephen Harper.

MR. JOYCE: Sounds like Stephen Harper – no, I do not know if he was that bad. He is pretty bad, but I do not know if it works like that in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, that was degrading – that was actually degrading. Not only was it degrading to the constituents, it made them suffer because it slowed everything down. I can give you examples where I personally made inquiries, had to go to the EA, the EA was off for ten days – ten days, off. So I said: Is there someone else? Oh no, we have no one to fill in. Well, can I speak to the minister? Oh no, they are busy, they cannot talk to you. So I said this person has to wait – in one case up to ten days; ten days and you could not get an answer.

You can see why the frustration is on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Can you see the frustration built up? Can you see why there was so much pressure on this government to change this, Mr. Speaker?

It is common sense that if we are here to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we should do it to the best of our abilities. Take any position you like, but if there are barriers set up we should take them down. We should not put up barriers, like go to our EA. Then by the time you get an answer back from the EA either the issue has resolved on its own, or there is so much suffering done to the (inaudible) that you are supposed to be working with.

That was just another part of Bill 29 that came in, Mr. Speaker. I will just give you another example. I do not want to bring up too much because there are a lot of issues.

I know the minister may have brought it in today that he is going to do a review on Crown lands. He is going to bring in a review on Crown lands. I am going to put another Freedom of Information in because I know I am not going to get the information – on the land use advisory committee, Don Downer. The last count I had from Don Downer he was up to \$700,000 of a land use advisory committee for a committee that was set up five years ago, Mr. Speaker, and they do not even have it done.

For three years there were no meetings, yet it is up to \$700,000. I have to put in a Freedom of Information to find out how much it costs and try to get a copy. There is no report, by the way. There is no report. I am trying to get a copy of where they are right now. That is what I have to do.

Why doesn't the minister, who is here listening, save me the time to put in a Freedom of Information. Stand up and say how much Don Downer is after getting paid for this part-time position. Oh, he is part of waste management now.

Here is what happened, Mr. Speaker, and I had to put this into the Freedom of Information to get this. When they stopped the land management use committee – which is an advisory committee that wasted almost \$700,000 – when everybody stopped that, they said: oh, bye the way, oh geez, you have no paycheque. We will put you part of land management now. He is over there now getting a paycheque. He ran for the PC Party. There is so much disgruntlement over there, over in waste management, it is unbelievable.

Now, the big question I am going to be asking, Mr. Speaker, because for three years he was not getting any money from land management for that advisory committee apparently. Now he is over doing the waste management. They said we started up this land use advisory committee, is he getting paid again? Mr. Speaker, I cannot find out.

This is the kind of information, Mr. Speaker, under the Bill 29 that we are trying to find out. This is another one. Just look at that, \$700,000 for an advisory committee for five, six years and still no report.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, \$700,000. That was the last now. It might have gone up a bit, I am not sure. I cannot find out.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about waste in government, if you want to talk about how we like to find out information and how we are going to do other things differently, this Bill 29 was an example of not what to do in this Province. I will not get into any of the quotes that were used. I will not get into that. I will just use an example.

My last example, Mr. Speaker, is Coppermine Brook. The Member for St. John's West, the Minister of Service NL – I put a freedom of information in. Get this – because they stopped forty cabins from doing anything. They cannot sell it, cannot give it away for the last two years.

The Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, I put a freedom of information in and said let me see the report. Guess what? I got it back three days ago saying we need a thirty-day extension because there is a public body, the people involved. At a public meeting, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, they said we did not do any report. Yet, I get a letter back from Service NL saying that we cannot because there is a third party. There is no report done, Minister. There is no report done.

Mr. Speaker, I am willing to bet they are going to put someone up. They are so embarrassed, they will put someone up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the applause on the other side when I sit up. I really appreciate that.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Bay of Islands on a point of order.

MR. JOYCE: I just want to say to the minister, we are not applauding you. We are just applauding that government finally put someone up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, certainly it is an honour and a privilege any time I stand in this House and speak to a bill, and certainly a bill of this magnitude.

I got elected a little over three years ago for the first time, like many people here around me and many people on the other side of the House. We made a commitment to honesty, integrity, to be honourable members of this House, to represent the people of this Province as best we can, to do the very best we can in everything we do inside this House and outside this House. There is not one time in the three and a half years did I lose sight of that, Mr. Speaker, not one time.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at a lot of the legislation that was passed in this House that I spoke to, I am very proud of the work I have done. The information we had at the time, that we had when we spoke to legislation that was provided to us, we researched and we committed to it. There is some legislation that we are going to look back and say, wow, what have we achieved? How have we moved Newfoundland and Labrador forward? Muskrat Falls is a prime example of that, Mr. Speaker.

There is other legislation, Mr. Speaker, certainly we would look at as a government, as a people, as a party, that you look back and say: Could we have done better? We find ourselves today on our feet in the House of Assembly speaking to that in a humble way, in an honest way, with integrity and respect. Mr. Speaker, that is where I am going to start my debate from today.

Bill 1, An Act To Provide The Public With Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy, is an important piece of legislation. It

is going to change how we do business in this Province. It is going to add to some of the things that we started as a party, as a people, and other parties had started before us.

The Liberal Party was the first one to do the work around access to information. They did not enact the legislation. It was our government that brought in that legislation. So I give them credit for doing the work previously, but we are the ones who brought that legislation in.

When I was in private business, I actually went through an Access to Information request. We were not happy with the decision the government made, my company. I was the one who took the lead on that. It was an interesting process. When I got the first documents that were pretty stacked, much of it was blacked out. So I had to try to understand exactly what was going on here, because I did not fully understand. I had come from the business world and getting involved in the government bureaucracy of such requests.

Mr. Speaker, the more I dove into it and the more I understood it, the more I realized that it is there for a reason. This is the original legislation before Bill 29, long before that. It was there for a reason, and we went through the process. We understood why there was some redaction going on. We understood there was information that was privileged to the company, that was mentioned in the information we were looking for that we thought maybe had gotten an unfair advantage.

At the end of the day, we agreed with government of the day to disagree. We did not agree with the decision they made. It was this government here, Mr. Speaker, and I stand on my feet again with honesty and integrity and communicate that. At the end of it, I understood the decision they made. We were fine, and we went about our business. They did not hurt our business one little bit, but I understood why that legislation was put in place. I understood why it was crafted and I totally got that.

Mr. Speaker, as we moved forward as a government and we decided that we wanted to amend that legislation, we looked at it from a number of different ways. The advice we had at the time was good advice. It was solid advice,

but was it all the right advice? Well, Mr. Speaker, we are here today to show you that we are willing to change some of our thoughts and our beliefs, originally, and move forward. That is why we are here talking about this.

So over the last number of months since the release of the ATTIPA Review Committee's report, a number of things have occurred in carrying out our government's commitment to implement the recommendations. A comprehensive analysis of the report has been carried out. An interdepartmental team has been assembled to provide further analysis to assist with the implementation. The Office of Public Engagement has taken the lead. There were a number of recommendations that we had to consider. So there were a number of things that we had to do to get us to this place in time right now where we are debating this bill in the House today.

There were ninety recommendations including draft legislation, which became the actual legislation. There might have been a couple of tweaks there, I believe. Changes to practice and procedures – we have started some of that already, Mr. Speaker. Of the ninety recommendations, sixty-five are legislative recommendations contained in Bill 1. Once the recommendations are fully implemented, we expect Newfoundland and Labrador will be a world leader in Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.

Some of the things we are talking about, and I have heard the debates back and forth, we have not really talked much about the protection of privacy for the people of the Province. That is an important piece. Most of the conversations have been around access to information.

When I talked to the people of the Province, when I talked to my friends and neighbours who do not fully understand what ATIPPA really means, when I asked them what is more important to you, they say protection of my privacy is really important. We take that very seriously.

So that has been lost a little bit in this debate, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted to get it out there and make sure people understand that the protection of their privacy is paramount. That

we need to protect the privacy of individuals and companies as well as they go about and do their business.

The recommendations in the report include greater emphasis on transparency, broadening the role of the Office of Information and Privacy Commissioner and developing a user-friendly application of the act. Mr. Speaker, this feeds into something that we came out on a few months ago, something that probably really overshadows this legislation, which is important legislation.

We made a decision as a government to become the most open government we possibly can be and could be. We made that decision a number of months ago. We want the best open government practices in the world. We want to build on a culture of openness with a government by promoting access to information, like we are doing with this bill, by providing access to information and data freely online within our online systems, and have an enhanced dialogue with the people of the Province to make sure we fully understand where they are coming from. They may not always agree with the decisions that we make, but we at least understand where they are coming from.

We know that, Mr. Speaker, when we make decisions to govern, there are going to be two sides; one side over here and a side over there. We try to balance and we come up the middle. Usually it is what we do, or we make firm policy decisions and we go forward with that. That is what you do as a government. That is what you do as a government that has a mandate to lead and govern.

The Open Government Initiative will only work if we have the strongest possible Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation possible, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are trying to achieve here. It is all about our goal to have the best open government in Canada and in the world.

Before I talk about the bill, and get into more details about that, I just want to talk a bit about this context, about open government and how this legislation relates to that, and how it relates directly to the act. First of all, what is open government? I mean that is a question people

ask. What is open government? How do we measure that? We need strong institutions which we have in this Province. We are lucky to have them.

Open information is about the practice of the proactive release of government information, records, and reports. Mr. Speaker, you can go online now and have a look and see what we have online. There is an absolute wealth of information about what our government is doing, what we are planning to do, and what we have done. It is a mix.

I mean, you can spend hours and hours online and find out things – anything that relates to you, or relates to your community, or relates to your workplace. It is amazing what we have online right now, but we want to do more. We are committed to do more. We are committed to becoming more open. We are committed to becoming more transparent. We want to have as much information online as possible so you do not have to go through requests for information, so that you can go online yourself and gather and get that information that you require in a quick manner.

The ability to do that is there now. There is a lot of information out there. I encourage people to check out our government website and go from department to department. You will be amazed and surprised to find out what is there; things that could change your life, things that could point you in a direction to go in your career, things that you can do to help your community.

There are so many things that are available on our website to talk to the people of the Province. There are ways for you to talk back to us and ask us questions. That is a goal of open governments. We think it is so important, for good governance, to make that happen. We have made that a priority, Mr. Speaker.

So when we look across departments and release of government-wide information, it is a good thing. It is what people want. They want that openness and transparency, and we are committed to that. This bill is just one part of that open governance model that we are talking about.

We have Orders-in-Council that are online. We have ministerial expense claims online. We have member accountability and disclosure reports online for all to see. Awarded tenders – online. Information by topic – go in there. Business, child care protection, education, financial, environment and parks, health care, income and employment, lands and property.

When you look at my department, Mr. Speaker, my two departments, Environment and Conservation, you can go online and see what environmental assessments are out there, or EPRs that are out there – Environmental Preview Reports. You can see what we are saying about the moose population and caribou population in the Province. You can go online and check out our campsite reservation system. There are so many things in Environment and Conservation where you go online and see what government has to offer, services that we provide to people of the Province, and that is all about open governance.

When you look at my Department of Service NL, it is the same thing; there is a multitude. You go online in my department, it is amazing what is there. It is about being open and transparent and speaking to the people of the Province and making sure that they understand that their government is working for them and doing the right things. Just like I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, when I got elected I made a commitment to openness, honesty, integrity, representing the people of my district as best I possibly can be, and acting in an honourable way. Government wants to do that. There is not a member in this House here who does not have that goal in mind.

So this legislation is consistent with that goal, that everybody here has in their mind about what they want to do themselves, and how they want to act and behave and represent the people of the Province. It is so important, Mr. Speaker.

So when we look to Bill 1, which again will enhance and build and complement our Open Government Initiative, it will help provide a framework that will put us in a new place when it comes to governance. We have heard the institutions that are out there that are looking at us, providing feedback as to the quality of this legislation, and we know that we hit the mark.

We know that the review committee did great work and excellent work, and we are going to support that work by enacting this legislation. Mr. Speaker, we know that we are doing it right in the right way, and we are doing it for the right reasons.

As I said, there were some important changes in this legislation that will help move us forward to get us to that better place of good governance, open governance, transparent governance.

The elimination of the \$5 application fee which allows anyone to make an Access to Information request regardless of their financial situation – now, we are hopeful that our Open Government Initiative will not require anybody to put any money down but if somebody finds themselves in the situation where they cannot find the information online, that it is not readily available when they make a phone call to their member or to the department or if something there is holding them back well, it is not going to cost them very much money to put in their information request. We think that is very important to the people of the Province.

More free time has been granted to applicants (inaudible) of the public body's ability to charge applicants from locating, reviewing, and severing records, locating them – again, that is going to help people when they are looking for that information that is not readily available. Over time, again we are hopeful as we put more information online, more data online, that people will not need to go through this process, that it is going to be there at their fingertips when they want it in the format that they want it in.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are several notable early changes we have implemented already related to the protection of privacy; I alluded to that earlier. There are many people that I spoke to who were more worried about that than the access to information. Well, this bill obviously provides balance but the protection of privacy – protecting the identity of applicants through the ATIPP request process is important, so we are making sure the integrity of that process is in place so that when applicants put their requests in for information, that their identity is kept as private as possible and that the information is not provided, about their identity, to the people who are doing the work – and certainly to the

politicians as well, which is the most important piece as well.

A requirement that departments report all privacy breaches to both the Office of Public Engagement and the Office of the Information and Privacy Officer. Mr. Speaker, I was in a department that had a couple of instances recently, that had privacy breaches – absolutely unacceptable. I will not tolerate that in my department, Mr. Speaker. Accidents happen, we can understand that, we can get that; but intentional privacy breaches, not on for it, and we report that immediately to the Privacy Officer and we make sure that is done in a timely manner, and timely is immediate. The people of the Province want that. We report that. We make that public.

Mr. Speaker, we are not afraid to own up when we make mistakes. We are not afraid to own up that government is not perfect at times. This is what this bill is all about.

I just want to bring some balance to this. I just want to bring some calmness to this. I want to take some emotion out of this, and that is what I am doing standing on my feet here now. We just want to make sure that people of the Province understand why we are doing this. We are doing it for the right reasons. We are doing it because we believe in this Province. We believe that you deserve the best government possible. We have done so much work in the last ten years, as a party, as a people, to get us to this place where we are today. We want to make sure that we have the most open government possible going forward now and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, that will be a legacy we will leave behind when we are done ruling this Province. That is not going to happen any time soon because we are in good shape coming into the fall. We want to make sure that this works for us for the next four years. We will let the people of the Province decide that. I have confidence in the people of the Province that they know we made more good decisions than bad decisions. This is a good decision we are making here today, to put this before the people of the Province, to let them know that we are solid, that we are going to govern with honesty and integrity, that we are going to take care of things that need to be done and we will correct wrongs.

In closing: open government, transparency, accountability, participation, collaboration, increasing access to information and data, increasing opportunity for involvement, commitment and action by all departments across government, use of online tools, share information as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, open governance is what this is all about. This is not just about ATIPP. It is not just about access to information. It is not just about privacy. It is about the bigger concept of open government. Mr. Speaker, that is where we want to be.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you about this today and to bring some common balance to this discussion.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With leave of the House, and I think in agreement of the parties, we are going to take a supper break and resume our debate at 7:00 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER: With leave of the House, we will resume at 7:00 o'clock and take a recess until then.

Hearing no objection, we will resume at 7:00 o'clock.