



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

FOURTH SESSION

Number 6

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

Wednesday

April 29, 2015

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear members' statements from the members representing the Districts of St. John's South, Burgeo – La Poile, Cape St. Francis, Bellevue, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, and Baie Verte – Springdale.

Before I recognize the Member for St. John's South, I would like to take a moment to recognize a long-serving employee of the House of Assembly who will be retiring tomorrow. Many of you may know Ms Marian Burry who works in Corporate & Members' Services. Marian is retiring after almost twenty-six years of public service.

She joined the Legislature in 2007 and previous to that she worked in the Department of Finance. Many of you and your constituency assistants would have spoken directly with Marian, as she is one of the team that processes our invoices and claims, and I know that we are all grateful for and appreciative of Marian's attention and diligence.

On behalf of all members, as well as the staff of the House of Assembly, I wish to thank Marian for her contribution to the public service and wish her all the best for a very happy and a healthy retirement.

She was shy and decided not to join us, but we figured it was important we recognize her anyway.

Congratulations, Marian.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure she was watching.

Mr. Speaker, today I recognize a person who usually tries to fly under the radar. Vince Wiltshire has been a quiet help to the residents of Maplewood Manor. He has, for several years, provided help in organizing events and ensuring that any matters that need to be addressed at the building after hours are given the attention they need. He is a comfort to many residents, and the fact that they know that he is there, should they need him, gives a great sense of security.

Many members will recall the fire that caused Maplewood Manor to close, with some residents unable to return to their home for months while the building was under repair. Vince, in the early days after the fire, was trusted by residents to enter their apartments and retrieve their medications and other personal belongings. He went to the apartment of every resident who needed anything retrieved. He spent days ensuring that the medications were distributed to the proper residents. This effort took a great deal of time and organization.

Vince is often seen going through the building ensuring that everything is in order. He does not look for recognition, but it is only fitting that he be recognized. To the quiet but professional Vince Wiltshire, I salute you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise to recognize and congratulate William "Bud" Murphy, Martin Harvey, and Ronald Marshall upon receiving Korean War medals.

The veterans were named Ambassadors for Peace and given medals as a token of appreciation. During a special ceremony at the Royal Canadian Legion in Port aux Basques, the three local Korean War veterans were recognized by the South Korean government for their contributions. It was my great honour to personally present Mr. Murphy with his medal. Mr. Harvey was ill and unable to attend, but his medal was delivered to him. Mr. Marshall lives in this area now and I will be presenting his medal to him.

The Ambassador for Peace Medal began to be presented to veterans as a special memento for those who returned to South Korea through the Revisit Program. The honour has since expanded to veterans who cannot make the long journey to Korea.

Mr. Murphy served from August 1950 to August 1952; Mr. Harvey, from December 1951 to October 1954; and Mr. Marshall, from November 1949 to March 1954.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in extending congratulations to William “Bud” Murphy, Martin Harvey, and Ronald Marshall on receiving these well-deserved medals.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department for forty-one years serving the communities of Torbay and Flatrock.

The fire department responded to 244 calls last year. They have thirty-eight dedicated members. Chief Mike McGrath has been a member of the fire hall for forty-one years.

This year firefighters Rob Dowden, Jonathan Christopher, and Karen Greeley received recognition for five years of service.

Firefighters Ken Dodd, Phillip Whitten, and Pat Butler received fifteen-year pins.

Firefighter Kent Abbott received a twenty-five year pin having served twenty-three years in Grand Falls-Windsor and two in Torbay.

Fire Prevention Officer Bob Webber received his thirty-year service. Bob and Kent were also

granted gifts from the town and the Ladies Auxiliary.

In addition, I would like to recognize the Ladies Auxiliary. There are fifteen members, and the support they give to the department is fantastic. As are the takeout dinners that they provide to support the hall.

The communities of Torbay and Flat Rock are very grateful for their fire departments. I ask all hon. members in this House to congratulate and thank all fire departments across this Province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Town of Arnold’s Cove. Arnold’s Cove recently received a four-bloom rating and a special mention for the volunteer efforts of residents during the 2014 Communities in Bloom National Symposium and Awards Ceremonies in Charlottetown, PEI.

The Town of Arnold’s Cove was judged in the “up to 1,000 population” category at the symposium. In July of last year, volunteer judges travelled to the communities to assess the overall contributions of the municipal councils and departments, industry, business, and the private sector with regard to tidiness, environmental actions, heritage conservation, urban forest landscape, and floral designs.

With the unease of climate change and other environmental concerns, this community can be proud of all their efforts and know that they provide real and meaningful environmental solutions that can benefit us all for generations to come.

Communities in Bloom is a Canadian non-profit organization committed to promoting civic pride and responsibility for our environment through

community involvement and the enhancement of green spaces. I would like all members of this hon. House to recognize the hours of dedication and commitment by all the residents for their efforts to make this possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to throw a bouquet to Hermitage-Sandyville's Major, Mr. Steve Crewe. Those who choose to serve on municipal councils are to be applauded for their acceptance of this significant responsibility.

Beginning his municipal career at the young age of twenty-three, Mr. Crewe has already demonstrated outstanding commitment to his fellow residents. Today, it is an honour to congratulate Steve for his twelve-year Long Service Award from the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs and to thank him for his service as councillor, deputy mayor, and mayor during those years.

From working with Mayor Crewe, I can attest that his commitment and passion has served our Province very well. Steve has a long record of giving selflessly to his fellow residents. From serving with council to being assistant fire chief, the countless hours he dedicates to his community and the Province are greatly appreciated.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Mr. Crewe and encourage him to continue to be an excellent voice for the residents he represents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, I would like to welcome to the public gallery his wife, Linda, and his father-in-law, Mr. Batten.

Welcome to the public gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We could use your help sometimes keeping the member under control.

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a great understanding wife and a great father-in-law, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to applaud the stellar efforts of the Valmont Academy Boys 2A Soccer team.

Hosted on October 17 and 18, 2014, the School Sports NL Provincial Championships saw six teams vie for the coveted title. After narrowly defeating St. Joseph's of Lamaline by a 1-0 victory, the Vikings fell short in the championship game by a 4-0 score to a stubborn squad from Holy Name of Mary from Lawn.

The Valmont Vikings silver medalist roster included: Riley Burt, Kobe Welshman, Jordan Janes, Nathan Squires, Brenden Keats, Nick Snow, Douglas Squires, Brandon Burt, Matthew Burt, and Skyler Budgell. Along with their coach, Mr. Steve Earle, the Vikings are to be commended for their accomplishment.

School Principal, Mr. Ryan Kelly, his staff, and the volunteer parents all have worked diligently to foster a healthy, positive, environment in which the students excel.

I ask all colleagues in this hon. House to join me in congratulating the Valmont Academy Viking Boys Soccer team upon capturing the silver medal at the School Sports Provincial Championships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight job fairs – one of the many services available to the provincial government’s employment centres.

Serving communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, these people-focused resource centres provide important employment services connecting job seekers to employers. Resume writing, career planning, skill development and training are just some of the services available at employment centres in our Province. At these centres, individuals can work one-on-one with staff and employers, can obtain assistance with recruitment and retention. Job fairs are one tool used at the centres to bridge the gap between employers and job seekers. These fairs are typically held for a number of reasons – often to promote particular careers or to respond to a large-scale industry change.

As an example, the provincial government recently partnered with Shoppers Drug Mart to organize a job fair and recruit locally. The job fair took place in March at Regatta Plaza Employment Centre in St. John’s and over fifty individuals attended. Pre-screening of job applicants and basic interviews were held on-site. Those individuals who passed the pre-screening and basic interview processes were given formal interviews. Following the fair, some of the individuals were hired. The employer was very pleased with the turnout and stated to Employment Centre staff that the centre was the ‘perfect atmosphere’ for the job fair.

Mr. Speaker, we took a similar approach last year and offered employment services for those workers impacted by the closure of Sykes Call Centre in Corner Brook and Terra Nova Shoes in Carbonear. An employee and skills assessment inventory was developed to help match employee needs to the services offered

through the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. The data collected through the inventory was then used to tailor a job fair for displaced workers, as well as to identify retraining opportunities with regional education and training institutions and potential new employers in these areas.

The provincial government continues to assist employers and individuals when they are making important employment and career-related decisions. By matching employers to workers and people to jobs, we are helping Newfoundlanders and Labradorians find meaningful employment in our Province so they can work and raise their families right here at home, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I remind him, Terra Nova Shoes is in Harbour Grace.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a miserable track record on jobs. We have seen 10,000 jobs disappear in the last two years, and just the other day government cut 1,420 more jobs. Lab West is reeling from layoffs.

When government celebrates that fifty people attended a job fair, and I quote, “...some of the individuals were hired.” I have to point out the lack of accountability. How many were hired? How many of the workers who lost their jobs at Sykes Call Centre and Terra Nova Shoes are employed today? Where is the accountability? Where is the case management? Where is the follow-up?

One job fair, Mr. Speaker, is a drop in the bucket when government is failing to lead, failing to create the conditions for business to succeed, and failing to diversify our economy. Workforce planning, workforce alignment, and workforce development are critical to growing our economy and ensuring people have the

opportunity to earn a living, raise their families, and remain in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 an advance copy of his statement.

I do commend the work of staff in employment centres across the Province who work hard to connect job seekers with skills and opportunities to further their careers, but thousands of youth are leaving this Province to find work. We need a new proactive strategy to employ them here, because we are facing a demographic crisis.

Deciding to cut 77.5 teaching positions and 1,420 civil service jobs is denying nearly 1,500 job opportunities for our youth in the future. That is not much in the way of a strategy, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 rise today to congratulate the winners of SAFE Work NL's – *Who Wants to Save a Life?* game show. Holy Spirit High School of Conception Bay South captured the win in the senior high school division, and Menihek High of Labrador City emerged as champions in the junior high division. Each winning team brought home \$5,000 for their school. Furthermore, members of the winning high school team each received \$1,000 scholarships, while the junior high champion contestants each received an iPad Air.

Elementary school students also participated in exhibition game shows, Mr. Speaker, with St. Francis of Assisi School of Outer Cove and Hazelwood Elementary of St. John's taking top honours. Each of the winning contestants

received a \$100 iTunes card, and the teams also received \$500 for their perspective schools.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. S. COLLINS: In its seventh season, Mr. Speaker, the trivia game is designed to educate and engage youth in workplace health and safety. It was developed and funded by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission, in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Mr. Speaker, like any valuable life lesson, the importance of safety is a message that needs to be continuously reiterated from a young age. Initiatives like this one are an effective tool to help deliver that very message. Young workers aged fifteen to twenty-four consistently have a lower lost-time injury rate than the provincial rate which is why it is so important to continue our efforts to build a strong safety culture among this group. Building such a foundation will ultimately lead to fewer workplace injuries and illnesses now and into the future.

In a strong safety culture, everyone feels responsible for safety and pursues it on a daily basis. Employee commitment is a hallmark of true safety culture, and it is important that we instill this commitment at a young age. Mr. Speaker, I applaud the efforts of everyone involved in the delivery of this innovative game show which is helping influence our future workforce and community leaders.

The game show will air Province-wide on Rogers Television this fall. I encourage schools interested in the 2015-2016 game show season to contact the commission for more information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, and the Official Opposition,

want to congratulate Holy Spirit High school as well as Menihek High. I certainly applaud any initiative to engage people at a young age in occupational health and safety.

Mr. Speaker, given the fact that we hear about the plight of injured workers in this Province on an almost daily basis, given the fact we have a workers' comp system that we know is failing these injured workers, given the fact that we have so many issues at the workers' comp review division with cases backlogged, given the fact that this government is doing absolutely nothing to resolve this problem, the best thing we can do for our young people in this Province and future generations is to make sure they do not end up on workers' comp to begin with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Mr. Speaker, if anyone had the chance to attend yesterday's event here at the Confederation Building for those killed or injured on the job, they would certainly understand that a culture of safety is indeed needed in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that amongst our young people, injuries happen in the first three months on the job and injuries happen twice a day in their particular age group. The numbers are low but we should work towards zero, and that is what this program aims for.

Congratulations to the game show creators, the participants, and the prize winners. Thanks for raising awareness.

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.

Yesterday the Premier admitted that he entered into a \$600,000 agreement with Partnerships BC to privatize four long-term care sites in our Province. We understand that this was a sole-source contract.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't you use an open public tendering process for this \$600,000 contract?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In order to do this project properly and correctly, we wanted to retain the services of those who had extensive experience, those who have ability, and have a track record of success, Mr. Speaker. When we looked around through jurisdictions across the country, we found that Partnerships BC, a Crown corporation of the Government of British Columbia, has had great success in these types of partnerships, have had great success and had a proven track record.

We are partnering with a Crown corporation of another province to make sure that we deliver the best services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, since this is such a big policy change for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, since there is \$600,000 at stake here, I would imagine that the Premier did some analysis with the other companies that they looked at.

I ask the Premier: Would you table the analysis of all the companies that you analyzed for this tendering process?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the approximately \$600,000 cost that the Leader of the Opposition refers to covers the management of these relationships and these projects from beginning to end. That is a fraction of what it would cost if we were to do it through the traditional route, through Transportation and Works, and whatever other consultants we could potentially engage.

As the Premier notes, Partnerships BC has unique experience. They have extensive experience and they have worked with other provinces and territories in the country. There was nobody else in the country we identified that had the same mix of unique experience and such extensive experience working with other provinces on these types of procurement projects and large infrastructure projects.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I doubt it very much and the people of the Province doubt it very much that given the magnitude of this spend and given the magnitude of what the Premier said yesterday how this is happening in so many other provinces that there is no one else in this country that is able to do this work.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that private business would control the level of care and the cost to seniors in these long-term care facilities. Later, the Deputy Premier said all of this would be controlled by government.

I ask the Premier: Why are you and your Deputy Premier giving different messages on such an important issue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, members opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – should be aware that what our goal is, is to provide quality services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: We have the fastest-aging population anywhere in the country. We have acute care beds, Mr. Speaker, that are being occupied by people who need alternative level of care. Acute care beds cost \$50,000 a month to operate. Long-term care beds in this Province typically cost about \$10,000 a month.

We have looked at other jurisdictions to find the ways that other provinces have had success in bringing in more long-term care beds. This type of partnership has been successful elsewhere, and we are going to be successful with it too, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I am looking for is some clarification for the people of the Province. The Deputy Premier said they would be controlling costs; they would be controlling the level of care. The Premier said that would be controlled by the operator. So maybe the Premier or the Deputy Premier, somebody should clarify who is controlling these costs.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: It is entertaining, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Leader of the Opposition misquoting

the Premier, trying to twist words and avoid any mention of the facts involved in this matter.

What I can assure the public, Mr. Speaker, is that this move will have no impact on the quality of care. The process of assessing individuals for long-term care will remain exactly the same. Individuals will be carefully assessed. They will still have a say in which facility they go to.

The financial implications for clients will be unchanged. There will be no comprising of standards. It is ludicrous, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that as a government we would entertain compromising the quality of care. It is just simply not true.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier said yesterday he has not done the math on how much this would cost, and so has the Finance Minister who also admits that he is not good at math. The Premier would not do the math.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't you do the math on this such important project? How much would it cost before you made your announcement?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we are going to be able to provide the same quality of care, the same standard of care, the same level of care at lower cost. That is why we are making this move, and it is a move that has been made in every other jurisdiction in Canada. So that is why we are following suit.

Yesterday, what we did was announce a new policy direction, and we identified our plan to move forward on that policy direction. If we had simply gone out and finalized partnerships and finalized deals, we would be hearing from the other side, well, this is a closed and secretive

government. We would be hearing complaints that we are moving in a significant policy direction without letting the public know what we are doing. We are being very transparent about what we intend to do. We will maintain a high quality of care and we will save money.

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.

Speaking of consulting with people, privatizing long-term care is a big shift in public policy and requires public consultation, but before making the announcement, the Premier did not consult and workers are now speaking out against his plan.

When a previous government was accused of not consulting on P3s, here is what a minister said, "It's arrogant, it's wrong, and it leads to bad decisions that hurt people."

AN HON. MEMBER: Who said that?

MR. BALL: That was the current Minister of Finance.

I ask the minister: Do you still stand by those comments that you made in 2003?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in our health care, acute care facilities today – and I talked a few moments ago about the cost of an acute care bed, \$50,000 a month –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – and a long-term care bed at around \$10,000 a month. Right now, Mr. Speaker, we have experiences in our health care

centres that members opposite have brought to the floor of this House of Assembly many times about cancellations of surgeries, about beds in hallways, and emergency rooms because there are no acute care beds available in the hospitals –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – because a lot of times they are being occupied by long-term care patients. We found a way to construct 360 long-term care beds. We do not have to pay for the infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, but it is still going to create jobs. It is going to be operated by either a private or a not-for-profit organization, like has happened in this Province for decades. It has happened like that in this Province for decades.

Members opposite know the value of business. They know the value of partnering with business. Do you support partnering with business to provide (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I say to the Premier, it is very clear –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: It is very clear what I support, it is consulting with people who know, putting the analysis before you make the final decision. Planning before you act is extremely important in any successful business, I say to the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Making infrastructure announcements without any idea on cost is nothing new for this government. In 2013, Minister King announced the replacement of Her Majesty's Penitentiary with no cost provided. Last fall, the Premier and Judy

Manning announced a new courthouse in St. John's, no cost provided. Now, four long-term care facilities, no cost provided.

I ask the Premier: Why are you making infrastructure announcements without the basic details worked out?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I asked the member opposite was, does he support government partnering with private and not-for-profit business, Mr. Speaker.

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.

In response to the last question by the member opposite, I asked him to clarify, because he has not done that yet: Does he support government partnering –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: I asked him: Does he support the concept of government partnering with private business and not-for-profits in the provision of services?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: It is a very clear question.

Mr. Speaker, what should be very clear to this House of Assembly and what should be very

clear to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that, once again, while we stand here and make gutsy decisions, bold decisions, innovative decisions, members opposite sit on their hands and do not take a position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an unusual circumstance in Question Period where they Leader of the Opposition gets a chance to answer a question from the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: So I will answer that question. No problem at all.

I like partnerships. I like partnerships with communities; I like partnerships with workers all based on consultation, a strong business plan, putting strategies in place so that you can have a successful business, Mr. Speaker. That is my answer to the Premier.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad he agrees with us as a government because this morning we established our support for communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, when we announced the attrition plan, we showed the respect for workers that we have in the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I remind members of the House once again, he still has not said if he supports business and government working together to provide services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

He does it in his personal life as a personal care home operator.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: He does it in his personal life in the pharmacy business. This is the same model. It is private business working with government, providing very important services to our aging population, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: I say to the Premier, you are a different person now than when you were the Minister of Transportation and Works and you hid the Stantec report from the people of Western Newfoundland. You hid it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I asked about the long-term care facility back on January 15 and when it would be complete. On that day the Minister of Health said, and I quote, "I look forward to getting that project underway in 2015."

I ask the minister: Will you keep to your commitment today that construction will start in

2015, and what year do you expect this to be completed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we are very committed to the people of the West Coast and ensuring that we construct the new hospital campus in Corner Brook that is frankly long overdue.

In terms of the time frame for long-term care, it was our intention to have construction started on that particular component this year. There still will be construction activity and site work on the Corner Brook site in 2015. We intend to award a contract for this new long-term care facility as early as October, but the good news here is that as a result of going this route, the long-term care facility in Corner Brook will be completed at least a year earlier than planned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with comments in the House of Assembly, which he changes every second month, people are going to look for his Scout's Badge of Honour back.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said that they were going to enter into a unique contract –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – for the thirty-nine beds for rehab, retroactive care, and palliative care.

I ask the minister: Can you tell me the details of this unique contract?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of alternative beds, restorative care beds, rehab beds, palliative care beds that are part of the plan for the overall Corner Brook hospital campus. We would like to have those beds located in the same building where the long-term care facility will be; and, to do that, we will enter into a partnership where the private operator will provide the space for Western Health employees to provide services through publicly funded beds the same as would be done today, Mr. Speaker. That is our intention. The facility will have 159 beds, as originally planned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the West Coast, the hospital action committee, are upset and confused by the announcement made yesterday. They deserve to have their questions answered.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Member for Humber West: Would you have a public meeting and tell your constituents why there is another delay?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, a year earlier is not a delay. If we were to stick on the current path –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Whenever they are ready, Mr. Speaker.

If we were to stick on the current path, we could construct the new long-term care facility through the traditional approach and it will be open by 2019. That is best-case scenario. The facility we just opened in Pleasantville took five years to construct.

Mr. Speaker, by going this route, we are very confident that by partnering with private sector, the new facility will be open in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. If people on the West Coast have concerns, I invite them to contact me. We have a website established. I am talking to concerned citizens on a regular basis, and I am going to continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

For four years now government has been keeping the sexual exploitation report secret, hiding it from taxpayers who paid for this report. Silence enables sexual exploitation and hiding this report re-victimizes those who share their stories.

I ask the Premier who is currently responsible for the Status of Women – the public have a right to know; key stakeholders in this study have a right to know – why do you continue to silence this issue by refusing to release the report and its recommendations? What are you afraid of?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue the member opposite here raises. It is a serious issue in society today, and it is also a very serious issue for those people who are engaged in this activity. We have to ensure that there is no risk at all that is raised in relation to safety of the people who are involved. What my understanding is from the RNC – not directly, but as being advised is that the RNC has concerns about the full release of this information.

Recommendations are out there in the public purview; however, we have concerns about the report itself being released.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Premier that I understand the seriousness of this issue and so does this entire side of the House.

Our Access to Information request regarding the sexual exploitation report tells an ever-changing story. We have an email from October 2011 from officials that states, and I quote: As requested, we have conferred with the RNC and RCMP. Neither force has any security concerns with respect to release of this report. When the minister later refused to release the report, the exact opposite was communicated –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the member to ask her question.

MS C. BENNETT: – to justify not releasing the report.

I ask the Premier: What is the real reason that you are hiding the report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the correspondence the member opposite is referring to. Actually, it is a former employee here within the department in government.

Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I have reiterate that I cannot speak for why that person put that into an email, but I can tell you that the RNC has a concern. The concern is if we release this report it could compromise the safety – I am not saying it is going to. I am not saying it is going to compromise, but it may compromise the safety of very vulnerable members of our society. That is not a risk that I am willing to take.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the Chief of Police personally and I have asked him if he has any concerns about the recommendations that are in this report and whether those recommendations should be released. He has assured me that he has no issues with releasing those recommendations.

I ask the Premier: Why are you refusing to release those recommendations?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is correct –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: The member opposite is correct in what she is saying, but just to be clear, what she spoke to the chief about were the recommendations. The recommendations are already in the public purview, Mr. Speaker. They were leaked.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

PREMIER DAVIS: She just said recommendations. Mr. Speaker, the recommendations were already published by local media. They were in the public purview.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

PREMIER DAVIS: I do know.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations had been released publicly. We are not talking about the recommendations; we are talking about the report, the contents of the report.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: So just to be clear – and I appreciate members opposite are very sensitive to this very important issue as well. I was not trying to and certainly did not intend to suggest they were not –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier has been recognized to answer a question. I would ask all other members for their co-operation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier, to continue.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand members opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said trying to explain, the recommendations are in the public purview. They are there and available to the public. What the discussion is about is actually the report itself.

My understanding – I have not spoken to the Chief of Police about this myself, but my understanding is that the RNC have concerns about the contents of the report that could risk

the safety of very vulnerable members of our society. In the absence of any other information, I do not want to take that risk. I am not willing to take that risk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, government has gone to great lengths to create a veil of secrecy around the action government needed to take as a result of this report.

Twice, June 2012, October 2013, when it seemed the report was going to be leaked, documentation shows government scrambled to come up with a communications plan and a list of current and prior programs and services that may have some relevance to the report's recommendation.

I ask the Premier – we have the recommendations – will you do the responsible thing and formally release the recommendations; and, even more importantly, be answerable to what your government has been doing to ensure that vulnerable women, youth, and people are protected and supported? Will you end this government's silence around sexual exploitation in Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: I have to be honest, Mr. Speaker. I am a little bit disappointed in the tone and suggestions by the member opposite. I have to be honest with you, because this is too much of a serious problem for individual lives, too much of a serious concern for vulnerable women in our society. I just do not like the tone. I have to say, I am a little taken back by it.

She is talking about releasing the recommendations. The recommendations are out already. They have been broadcasted. They have been talked about publicly. If a person goes online and googles them, you will find the recommendations. They are already there.

I believe we need to protect the information in the report in the best interest of some of the people who are referred to in the report and people who work in the business, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Water has time for a quick question.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Premier that my question was around his government's action on the recommendations. When is he going to accept and be answerable to those actions around the recommendations in the report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In all fairness, that is not at all what I heard from the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. I cannot overstate the seriousness of this issue. This is about the safety of individuals in our society – very vulnerable members of our society. We have an obligation to ensure, to the best and furthest extent possible, that we protect their best interests and we protect their safety, Mr. Speaker. That is why the report has not been released.

The recommendations are already out for the public to review and to see, but the report has been kept confidential, and I support that decision, 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.

The Premier says government will not have to pay for building and operating the proposed new long-term care facilities, just a per bed fee, but auditors in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and

Ontario have shown that P3s cost taxpayers more.

I ask the Premier: If indeed he has read these reports and what analysis has he seen which refutes their findings?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are numerous examples across Canada where this type of model for long-term care has been very successful. In other jurisdictions they have seen that private business, not-for-profits, can deliver a high quality of service meeting the requirements of the Province at a better value to taxpayers in the Province, Mr. Speaker.

This is a way for us to provide 360 new long-term care beds, quality services to the people of the Province, quality services to the aging population, Mr. Speaker, and doing it faster than we could if we did it ourselves.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

He has not read the reports.

The Saskatchewan Ombudsman is investigating thirty-five complaints levelled against a private Saskatchewan seniors home, complaints including the deaths of vulnerable people from neglect.

I ask the Premier: Can't he see the risks involved in privatizing highly specialized long-term care?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite and I can assure the people of the Province, that we are not going to sign off on

any project that compromises on the quality of care of our seniors in any way, shape or form.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: It is just not true.

Private facilities will be governed by the exact same operating standards. There will be policies and processes in place to govern those facilities. It has worked in every province in Canada. It is working right here in this region, and, Mr. Speaker, we will in no way compromise care. We will maintain the same kind of standards and we will save taxpayers significant money, as has happened right across the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday our registered nurses union raised alarms about staffing levels already too low in our long-term care homes with nurses overseeing the care of up to eighty patients. They warn that private company's goals are to cut costs to make profit.

I ask the Premier: Why is he again ignoring the expertise of our own nurses who do the work in long-term care facilities?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I will say it again. We will do nothing that would in any way compromise the quality of care, the standard of care, the level of care that seniors are receiving in long-term care homes in this Province. The standards, the processes, and the policies are not changing.

We acknowledge there are challenges in the health care system, and we listen carefully when nurses or other professionals within the health care system bring those concerns forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: We will ensure that whether the facility is public or whether it is privately owned, the policies and standards have to be maintained.

I know that there are unions raising concerns. If employees in these new facilities wish to unionize, they are quite willing to do so. This is a labour-friendly environment, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, our nurses are the experts on the ground in our long-term care facilities. We all want every dollar allocated for long-term care to go directly to providing the best care possible.

I ask the Premier: How is it that he thinks any percentage of our precious public dollars for long-term care going into the pocket of private companies for pure profit is the best use of our long-term care dollars?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, it is concerning to hear those comments. The cost of a long-term care bed in our publicly-owned and operated facilities today is well in excess of \$10,000. We know from looking across the country and looking at our own experience right here in Newfoundland and Labrador that the savings per bed – the cost per bed, let alone the fact that we do not have to outlay any capital dollars to build these facilities – could be 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

This is being wise in the use of taxpayers' dollars. At the same time, we will not compromise care, the standards, the quality in any way, shape, or form. We have shown

leadership on long-term care. We have shown leadership on wait times, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the folks opposite, we have a plan and it is working.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. HILLIER: 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 2 on the Conception Bay South Bypass road is the second busiest highway in the Province; and

WHEREAS we might ensure the safety of the residents who use the access road especially when driving at night; and

WHEREAS brush cutting can reduce the risks to drivers from the local moose population;

We the undersigned petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to allocate funding to include brush cutting for the Manuels Access Road.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I have brought this petition forward. The issue here is

moose management on that section of highway, basically from the Trans-Canada Highway down to Manuels Bridge. That is the area between Fowler's Road and Weirs pit where we know there is a large population of moose.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, this is the second busiest highway in the Province. In 2012, the daily rate of transportation of vehicles over this highway was about 25,000 vehicles. Now that the road has been opened to Holyrood, we can only imagine how many vehicles come on that road on a given day.

Mr. Speaker, I have been circulating this petition, or this petition has been circulating in my district. The people using this road not only come from my district, Mr. Speaker, they come from the District of Harbour Main. They also come from the District of Topsail, the Premier's district. What happened with this particular petition is that a group of people from Topsail got access to it and they had it filled out. I am bringing forward this petition today on behalf of the people of the District of Topsail, that is the Premier's district.

Mr. Speaker, this is not new to me. As a councillor in Conception Bay South, I had the same group several years ago send me the following email. It says, "Hello Mr. Hillier, I am writing to ask if you would speak to the Minister of Transportation and Works" Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Works at that time is the current Premier and was their MHA at the time.

The letter goes on to say: This letter has been sent to the minister, our MHA. "There was a positive reply but I am concerned that nothing is being done."

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what has happened. That is why these people of Topsail, not my district, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's district, have decided to ask me to bring this petition forward.

Since then, council has written the Transportation Minister, and that is again the MHA for Topsail, and nothing was done.

Council wrote the next Transportation Minister. That was before he got fired by that particular Premier.

Mr. Speaker, this has gone on long enough. We need some brush clearing on the Conception Bay Highway.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his speaking time has expired.

MR. HILLIER: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to alert all members to a technical issue which is interfering with the live streaming of the broadcast over the web. The cable television is still working but apparently the web streaming, there is a difficulty with it and it is being worked on.

Also, during Question Period today, I would like to bring to the attention of the hon. the member for the Official Opposition that during Question Period he did refer to the Minister of Justice by his name. I would just remind you that, of course, is unparliamentary. I would remind all members, when you are speaking, to be careful to refer to members by their districts or by their portfolio.

Further petitions?

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our

Province today, and the cost of the impact of domestic violence is great both economically and in human suffering; and

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the Justice system including the police, the courts, prosecutors, defence counsel, Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, community agencies, and women's groups; and

WHEREAS the recidivism rate for offenders going through the court was 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent for those who did not; and

WHEREAS the budget for the court was only 0.2 per cent of the entire budget of the Department of Justice;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand and present the voice of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, thousands who have signed this petition over the period of the past two years. Signed the petition because they know how important the Family Violence Intervention Court was and they also know how important it is to expand the Family Violence Intervention Court.

I believe that most people were baffled as to why government would have cancelled such an important court, even though the research and the internal review of the court showed a positive response. All the particular agencies and government departments that worked with the court, in fact, found that the court did the work that it was set out to do.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Premier, through the Throne Speech, that he is going to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court, not only reinstate it but expand the services of the court to other parts of the

Province. I was able, in consultation with those who have worked in the court and with the experts in the area, to present a proposal to the Premier's office as to how the court could be expanded using existing infrastructure with very limited additional cost. I do hope that the expansion and reinstatement is done in a thorough and a comprehensive way.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SLADE: 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 on the average there are over 700 moose-vehicle accidents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador each year; and

WHEREAS approximately 10 per cent of those accidents result in serious injuries or fatalities; and

WHEREAS moose-vehicle accident mitigations, measures like moose fencing, brush cutting, and hunting quotas have reduced accidents in other provinces, in particular, New Brunswick;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase moose-vehicle accident mitigation measures including moose fencing, brush cutting, and increasing quotas to provide financial assistance to those most seriously injured as a result of said collisions.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is several of those now I am after bringing in here. The gentleman who I am bringing it here for, and the rest of the people in

Newfoundland and Labrador – this gentleman we will say was a provincial wildlife officer. He is now a paraplegic.

I know that some of the moose regulations just came out and one thing and another and I take note, there is no fencing in that. Until something like that is done, I am going to stand here each and every day to present petitions on behalf of those people, those who have been injured, or killed, or whatever the case may be. I think government can be doing so much better.

I thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It now being 3:00 p.m. we go to the Member for Labrador West to begin debate on his private member's motion.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to stand today and present a private member's motion.

I would like to read the motion into the record:

WHEREAS the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to be served by the most progressive Legislature in the country; and

WHEREAS greater effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved by the Legislature in its service to the people of the Province; and

WHEREAS modernizing procedures would allow for greater involvement of all MHAs in the legislative process.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the reforms of the House championed by the Premier and outlined in the 2015 Speech from the Throne, which include

“enhancing the roles of individual Members, reviewing the compensation of Members who hold special positions in the legislature, reviewing MHA pensions, reducing the number of seats and opening legislation to greater scrutiny.”

Mr. Speaker, this motion has four main pillars and these are four main pillars that our government has been talking about for quite some time now. The four pillars – first of all, we want to enhance the role of the individual members; secondly, we want to review the compensation of members who hold special positions in the Legislature; thirdly, we want to review the MHA pensions; and fourth, reducing the number of seats in the Legislature.

I want to talk a little bit about the purpose of this private member's motion. First of all, we want to provide the most progressive Legislature in the country. We feel that with some of the moves that we are going to make, some of the reforms that our government has gone through and asked the Speaker of the House to look at some of these reforms, that we can improve the Legislature here in our House of Assembly and certainly bring it up to be one of the best and most progressive Legislatures in the country.

Secondly, we would like to provide a more effective and more efficient process to the Legislature. What this will do is tighten things up here in the Legislature. It will give more involvement for all of the members of the Legislature. It will provide more information to all members of the Legislature. We want to modernize the legislative procedures to allow for greater involvement of all MHAs.

I have been here now for almost four years and one of the things that I have heard many of the MHAs, certainly backbenchers, say they would like to have more involvement within decisions that are made by government. Normally, government has their Cabinet sit in place and there are special committees, but what a lot of the MHAs and what our Premier and our government is looking at is having a much stronger involvement of all MHAs, not just those who sit on the side of government but all MHAs in the House of Assembly.

By modernizing the procedures of the House of Assembly it will enhance the roles of individual members. It will give all members stronger involvement and the MHAs will be involved in different departments and working on different files. It gives all MHAs more opportunity to be more informed and therefore able to speak better to many of the issues that come forward.

Quite often in a lot of the districts that we have, there are issues that come up and there are certain files within a district where an MHA really is not involved in the day-to-day procedure of that. By modernizing the procedures in the House, we may change some of that.

In all three parties there are special positions that are held by some members in the Legislature, whether it is a caucus Whip, the House Leader, or the Deputy House Leader. There are also different levels of compensation for those who hold those positions. I think it is only fair to say with all of those positions, those extra positions in all parties, there are also extra duties that come with holding those positions. For example, the caucus Whip. One of the things that has been discussed, certainly in our caucus on this side and with government, is the compensation that goes with those positions and whether or not we can look at and review not just the compensation of those positions but also the duties that go with it.

One of the comments I have heard in several conversations I have been involved in is: Are the duties a full-time duty or are they just when the House is open that those people hold those duties? We heard that in debate here in the House of Assembly a while ago when we were talking about parliamentary secretaries. A parliamentary secretary is also another outside position. Parliamentary secretaries who hold that position, it is almost a full-time position. You are not just a parliamentary secretary when you are sitting in the House of Assembly or when the House is open, you are a parliamentary secretary for the full twelve months. It is a full-time position.

A lot of these special positions within all of the parties that have them are positions where their duties are confined to when the House of Assembly is open. This is something that we

feel needs to be reviewed and possibly changed for the betterment of the House.

One of the big ones we have looked at is pension reform. It has been a very hot and sometimes contentious topic for a long time now, certainly in the four years that I have been sitting here in the House. As a private citizen of Newfoundland and Labrador, pension reform has been a very public issue.

This is something that our Premier has decided to spearhead a review on is MHA pensions. Our Premier and this government believe in leading by example. That is why we want to have a review of the MHA pensions done.

Before I move on, one of the things this government has done certainly is looked at the pensions. The public pension reform has already started. We look now at the MHA pensions. Again, I have to say that we want to lead by example over here.

I guess one of the big things in this private member's motion – and it has been debated to a certain amount already in the House – is a reduction of seats in the Legislature. This is something that all three parties have talked about, and I would like to say that the Official Opposition has supported here in the House of Assembly.

Our Premier started this initiative already. He asked that it be implemented early. It was to be reviewed next year. With all three parties stating that perhaps we could be more effective and more efficient with less seats – I know the Leader of the Official Opposition at one point said that he felt the House of Assembly could be very effective and very efficient with just forty members.

This is something that we have already started. By starting this early before the next general election, by reducing the seats by eight, it will save a significant amount of money. Over the four years that it would be implemented, by bringing it ahead now, it will actually save about \$10 million. So about \$2.5 million per year, and over the next four years. The reason I state that is because if it was not brought in before the next general election this fall, then it would be four years before it could be implemented. It

has a huge effect there and a huge dollar savings to it by implementing it early.

An independent commission has been set up. It is independently chaired by the hon. Justice Robert Stack. The Commissioners who sit on that committee are Bern Coffey with the Queen's Counsel, Mr. Allan Gouling, Mr. Bill Matthews, and Mr. Shawn Skinner.

There will be public consultations that are taking place. They are already happening throughout the Province. They end early in May. You can also send in written submissions, or you can go online and send in a submission if you wish. I know the general public have been invited to do presentations. I also know there have been members of the Official Opposition who have actually gone and done presentations to the Commission.

The Labrador seats are seeing no changes right now. That will stay at four. That is the recommendation. We already debated that here in the House of Assembly.

The Island portion of the Province will go to thirty-six seats, or thirty-six districts, which will be represented by individual members of the House of Assembly. The boundaries will be determined by a calculated quotient, which has been calculated to be approximately 13,500 per district.

Primacy must be given by the Commission that the vote of every elector shall have a weight equal to that of every other elector. Of course, the Commission will adhere to this to the best of their ability. They have a 10 per cent variance they can use. The Commission is allowed a 10 per cent variance within each district. In certain geographic circumstances they may apply and request a 25 per cent variance, which may be granted.

The Commission has the responsibility of naming the forty districts. They have been asked while naming the districts to consider the districts historical and geographical factors. The Commission has to have their submission, and its report has to be in to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety by June 9, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, to me this motion shows that we are being progressive. We want to have a progressive attitude. Our Premier is listening to the general public. We see there is some reform needed. The general public are asking for reform.

There has been some debate in the last couple of weeks since the new districts, the lines of margin have come out. We have certainly seen some resistance, I guess. It seemed that the general opinion of the public in Newfoundland and Labrador was that, yes, forty members is enough. We need a reduction in the House of Assembly.

What we are hearing some of now is that maybe forty will not be enough. All of a sudden when some of the general populace, and some of the members here in the House of Assembly, when they realized, oh, my district may be affected, they are not as in favour as they thought they would have been.

With this motion, I think I need to clarify that all three parties are being affected by this. It is an independent commission that is put in place. All three parties will be affected. There are some districts – there are pros and cons to anything. I guess to me, like anything in life, there are pros and cons to everything. Unfortunately, we have to deal with cons as well as we do with pros.

I think overall that this is a good motion that is being put forward. I think it is a progressive move by government. I think it is something that needs to be done and I think, at the end of the day, it is something that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will benefit from, not just financially.

As we all know, we are in difficult economic times. I know, for me, I watch the oil prices very closely and two weeks ago, the oil prices were below \$45; now they are nearing up to \$60 a ton. So, there is always movement, and I think that this motion is a good move. I think it is a progressive move. I think, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, it will improve the services that we as Members of the House of Assembly that we, as their elected members, will provide a service to them that we have been elected to do.

I am looking forward to the debate this afternoon. I am looking forward to hearing what the Opposition Party and the Third Party, where they stand on this. I am hoping that all members will stand and support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Before I recognize the member, I would like to advise everyone that the steaming problem has been repaired and fixed, so the rest of the afternoon will proceed as normal.

The hon. the Member for Stephenville East – St. George’s East, or something similar to that.

MR. REID: St. George’s – Stephenville East, yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the member for bringing forward this private member’s motion. I think it is very important to have a debate about how the House works, about democratic reform, and how we can improve it. I am looking forward to the debate we will have today and it provides an opportunity for us to explore some of the components of this House and how this House works.

I want to compliment the member for bringing forward this motion, but there are some things I do not like about this motion. I do not like the way it is politically charged, the way it is worded. Usually when you word a resolution, you can either approach it in one of two ways. You can either word it to allow for a broad range of support. You can word it in a way that opens it up to support from as many people as possible. Or, you can play politics with it. You can sort of charge it with political phrases that make it very difficult for people to support.

That is one of the things that I do not like about this motion is the way the partisan politics have been infused into the motion and make it very disagreeable. I do not think that is the right sort

of approach we should use when we are talking about such an important issue as democratic reform. I do not think that is the way we should throw these issues around as a political football.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to keep my comments in a constructive vein. Also, I am going to propose some amendments later on that will maybe take the politics out of this and sort of put it into a way that is more acceptable to other members of this House as well, and puts it on the plane that it should be on where we are looking at how we can improve this House for citizens of the Province.

I intend to have a constructive approach. I do not intend to be overly partisan in my comments. Also, I am going to restrict my comments to enhancing the role of individual members in this House because I think that is important. When you talk about democratic reform, that is really where you should be at, looking at how this House operates and how it could be better, Mr. Speaker.

One way we can examine what is happening in this House is to look at what other Legislatures do. How do they organize themselves? How do they do the work that their citizens want them to do? How can we learn from what they are doing? How can we adjust what they are doing to our particular circumstances in this Province, Mr. Speaker? That is where we should be at as we approach this issue of democratic reform.

I want to take a little bit of time and look at a comparison of Standing Orders of Legislatures that I did a few years ago for the Canadian Political Science Association, where I compared Legislatures across Canada and the Standing Orders, the rules of the Legislature. The Standing Orders are sort of compiled of traditions, customs, and practices. They bring all that together into how we operate the House. Some of the things we do every day varies from Legislature to Legislature. I want to take a little bit of time and do some comparisons across provinces that I think might be interesting and useful as we look at this topic.

One of the things that the Standing Orders usually lay out is the time that we spend in the Legislature. A lot of Houses have parliamentary calendars. One of the tests of any Legislature – I

guess the whole idea of a Legislature is it is the place where the government is held accountable. One of the tests of how accountable a government is, is how much time they spend in the Legislature, how much time they devote to being accountable.

I said I would not be overly partisan, but I think it is worth noting that over the last twelve years we really have not been in this House a whole lot, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes we have not even had a fall session. It is hard to claim that you have been championing something when you have not even opened the House. To say that someone is championing something, really, I do not think so.

Mr. Speaker, the time spent in the Legislature is one thing we should look at. Newfoundland is on the lower end of the scale. Also, it is sometimes difficult because the days that are spent in the Legislature – most Legislatures in Canada have longer sitting days. So they have longer days; they sit for the full day, Mr. Speaker. In comparison to other places, we maybe do not sit as long. That is something we may want to look at in terms of how we reform, how we operate, how we do our job.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, is questions. How do we deal with questions in this House of Assembly and how does that compare to other places across Canada? Now, there are three –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. REID: Yes, well that is interesting.

Response to questions is interesting, but also the time that people have to ask questions in the House. It is the length of the Question Period. Question Period is one of, I guess, the most important ways of getting questions to the government, holding the government accountable.

Let us look at the length of the Question Period in various Legislatures across Canada. Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan it is twenty-five minutes; that is the lowest in the country. Quebec, forty-five minutes; Ontario, sixty minutes; New Brunswick, thirty; Manitoba, forty minutes; BC, thirty minutes; Alberta, fifty minutes; PEI, forty minutes. In Nova Scotia, on

Tuesday and Thursday they have a one-hour Question Period, and on Wednesday they have a one-and-a-half-hour Question Period.

So the time that members have to ask questions, maybe that is something we need to be looking at. How long is our Question Period and how would that affect the interactions within the House? That is an interesting thing that maybe we need to consider. What fits our particular circumstance, Mr. Speaker? That is one point.

Another way of asking questions in the Legislature –

AN HON. MEMBER: And getting answers.

MR. REID: Yes, and getting answers is another point as well. Getting answers in Oral Questions is difficult, but an area where this House, I think, is really falling down in getting answers is in written questions. I think the idea of written questions has fallen into such disrepair that we do not even both to write questions and submit anymore.

Many other Legislatures in the country have provisions where questions that are written and put on the Order Paper have to be responded to by government. Mr. Speaker, we do not have that requirement here in this House. Maybe we should have that requirement. It is a way of asking questions and getting responses.

Another aspect of questions, in some Legislatures, in Ontario, in the House of Commons, during debate there are provisions there where people can ask questions during the debate. In Ontario, four members can get up and have two minutes during someone speaking – up to four members can use two minutes each to ask a question during the debate.

How does that change the nature of the debate? How does that add to the nature of the debate? How does it add to the quality of the debate? Those are things we should be thinking about. Those are options we should be examining here in this House, Mr. Speaker. Do they fit our circumstance? I do not know, but we should be looking at these things.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move my amendments now so I do not forget to do that. I

will move the amendments to the motion. The idea of moving these amendments is to take the politics out of the motion, to take the politics out of this and to just leave it bare and deal with the issue that we have before us.

My amendment, seconded by the Member for St. Barbe, is to move that the resolution be amended by deleting the WHEREAS clauses and deleting the words “championed by the Premier and outlined in the 2015 Speech from the Throne” and by adding in the resolution clause after the second reference to “House” add the words “of Assembly.”

Basically, this will take the rhetoric and the politics out of this resolution and put it where it should be.

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have copies in the House? We will recess to review the amendment.

MR. REID: Okay. Yes, I have copies.

MR. SPEAKER: The House stands recessed.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The amendment is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The speaker has the remainder of his time on the clock.

MR. REID: Yes, it is good that we can have a vote on this amendment and hopefully have the politics taken out of this motion, Mr. Speaker.

I want to just continue to make some comments about aspects of the House that we need to look at to improve the workability, how it works for citizens and how it works for individual members as they represent their citizens.

One of the things I want to talk a little bit about is committees and how the committees in this House work. Mr. Speaker, all across Canada other Legislatures, the House of Commons, they have active committee structures where bills are examined by committees; sometimes they are

taken by committees for public hearings so the public have input into the legislation, sometimes even before it gets to the House.

It is interesting, in this House, we have not had a real active committee system for the last twelve years, Mr. Speaker. It is hard to say you are championing something, championing the individual members in the House when, twelve years, you have had an opportunity to do it and you have not done it. It is hard to include something like championing the rights of individual members when you have not had a committee system in place.

Mr. Speaker, I remember back in the early 1990s when the Wells government was in power. They brought in a concept called legislative review committees. Before pieces of legislation even got to this House, they went to the legislative review committee and if the legislative review committee decided that they need to go to public hearings they went to public hearings and people had an opportunity to have their say on the bill; and, in many cases, improvements were made to the bill.

What have we seen in the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, in this House is pieces of legislation put before this House the day before the debate begins. So, we have to wonder how much public input there is and how much active debate there can be from either side of the House, from the members of the government side of the House or from the Opposition side of the House, when you have such little time to scrutinize a piece of legislation, understand it, and consult with your constituents before you actually vote on it.

Sometimes we have seen bills go through this House at such a rapid rate, only to have to come back and be amended and problems be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, these legislative review committees I think was a very good feature of the House.

Another thing that I want to mention is petitions, Mr. Speaker. Petitions are a right of citizens to bring an issue before parliament. In many parliaments, governments have an obligation to respond to petitions. In this House a few years ago, ministers used to get up and respond to petitions that citizens had gotten their members

to bring to the House. So responding to petitions, it does not happen in this House. Maybe that is something we should have a look at again is responding to petitions.

Private members' statements – in this House, we have private members' statements. Members have an opportunity to bring forward issues of a non-contentious nature. In other Houses, the nature of the statement can be contentious political issues. I am not sure which is best, but that is another area we may want to look at.

Mr. Speaker, other Houses have private members' bills. Members who want to bring forward an issue and have it brought before this House for a vote and brought into law can do it through a private member's bill. In this House we do not have provisions for private members' bills. We have provisions for private members' resolutions, like the one we are debating today, but we do not have provisions for private members' bills. Those are some things I think we should be looking at. I look forward to the debate on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in my place today as the MHA for the great and beautiful District of Port au Port on the very beautiful West Coast of this Province and to speak to this private member's resolution. I am very proud as well to second that resolution that was put forth by my hon. colleague, the Member for Labrador West.

Mr. Speaker, let me focus a little bit on the review of the electoral boundaries in our Province. Currently, as you know, there are forty-eight electoral boundaries or districts. Our Premier, during his leadership campaign last year and after he was sworn in as the twelfth Premier of the Province of Newfoundland,

talked about reforming the Legislature in Newfoundland and Labrador.

One of the things that he highlighted, Mr. Speaker, was the reduction of seats in the Legislature which was applauded by all parties in the Legislature. When the Premier went before the mics and spoke of this initiative, this idea of reforming electoral Legislature in the Province, and he said that he envisioned seeing cutting the amount of seats, they were running to the microphones. The Opposition were running to the microphones. That was my idea. They were saying: That was my idea. I talked about it last year at such and such a place.

We put the Commission in place, Mr. Speaker, led by Justice Stack. We appointed the commissioners. They have done some work. They have looked at the boundaries. They have a map now and they have proposed boundaries of where the boundaries should be for the next general election. They said that yes, it was very possible to go from forty-eight to forty seats.

Mr. Speaker, when the maps became public, all of a sudden some members of the Opposition started ranting and raving. This is not what we wanted. My district is no longer here. My district is gone. I have nowhere to run. In fact, Mr. Speaker, some of them have said that our boundaries have changed that much the new people coming into my boundary; we have nothing in common with them.

You are going to represent a district and you say that the new people coming to your district have nothing in common with the old part of the district – come on, you cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. You cannot go in the Legislature, vote for an amendment to the Electoral Boundaries Act and, all of a sudden, when it becomes apparent of what the electoral map will look like say whoa, that is not what I am in favour of. That is just a little bit of a news flash to some of the Opposition members over there.

Mr. Speaker, the 2015 Newfoundland and Labrador electoral boundaries commission was appointed. Like I said, they have started their work and now we see what the maps will look like for the next general election. They are now in the midst of public sittings. They are going across the Province. They have been in St.

John's, St. Anthony, Carbonear, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Corner Brook, and Grand Falls-Windsor. They are going to be in Clarendville, Whitbourne, Lewisporte, Marystown, Stephenville, and Conception Bay South.

Mr. Speaker, people have an opportunity to come out and present their views, their concerns, their recommendations, and their solutions. Whatever they feel like talking about to the Commission, this will be the time to certainly let it be known.

Also, that is not the only way to communicate with the Commission. There is a toll-free telephone line, website comment form, email, fax, regular mail. We encourage the input and (inaudible) from the public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, when you come in the House and you talk to a private member's resolution and you start hitting on the heart strings of the Opposition, they become a little boisterous, I would say, Mr. Speaker. You know the old saying, Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. CORNECT: You talk about reform, you made fun about the time I was in Cabinet and I stepped down from Cabinet for reforms. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? When I speak to the people of the Province they tell me it was the hon. thing to do, because that is what they wanted, a cut in Cabinet, a reduction in the seats in the Province. We encourage all members of the public to have their say on reform, especially on the reduction of seats.

Mr. Speaker, we have members of our own party who will be affected by voting for this move, but we voted for House reform because it is in the best interest of saving taxpayer dollars. It makes for a more open and efficient Legislature, but more importantly, we are doing something that the people of the Province have been asking for, for a long, long time.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the reduction of seats in our Legislature, even with the proposed reduction in Newfoundland and Labrador, we will still remain among the top three provinces in Canada with respect to average population per elected representative. That is very important, Mr. Speaker.

No matter where the boundaries may lie within your district, Mr. Speaker, what is important as an elected parliamentarian is to fairly represent every person who lives within that boundary. That is very important as a parliamentarian to remember, that your duty is to represent every person fairly within the boundaries of your district. More importantly, as a parliamentarian, when you sit in this Legislature it is our duty to represent every person in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with respect and fairly as well. That is our duty as parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, there are other members who are going to get up on this side of the House who want to speak. We were recessed for a while looking at the amendment, so time is passing by. We are here until 5:00 today.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I am proud to get up to support our resolution. I will be voting with our resolution.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

For the people who are watching, maybe I should say what is happening here today. This is a private member's resolution brought on by a government member. Private member's resolutions, generally, when they are brought forward by an Opposition member, usually it is a member of one of the Opposition parties trying to motivate government to do something like all-party committees, or to move the government forward on issues like mental health, or issues that are somewhat substantive.

Sometimes when these issues are brought forward in private member's resolutions and the government likes them and cannot easily vote against them, they will amend them to suit themselves and then using their majority they will pass them. Every third week the government members have an opportunity to bring forward a private member's resolution. Generally they are feel-good resolutions to give members an opportunity to speak on an issue that is an important issue, but generally an issue that all of us will agree with.

In this case, it is a resolution which would have people watching believe that the Premier is going to champion legislative reform. Well, why not? Of course the Premier should champion legislative reform. It should be ongoing indefinitely.

Where did they find this idea? This idea came from the Speech from the Throne which we heard just a few days ago. What they have done in this case is in the nineteen-page Speech from the Throne, they have lifted thirty-two words out of the Speech from the Throne in order to come up with the substance of their private member's resolution. Those words were by "enhancing the roles of individual Members, reviewing the compensation of Members who hold special positions in the legislature, reviewing MHA pensions, reducing the number of seats and opening legislation to greater scrutiny."

This is undoubtedly a good private member's resolution. I do not see how anybody could not support it. An amendment has just been proposed by the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East. The amendment has been in order, and that is to strengthen it somewhat.

All I can say about the performance of government is that the best indicator of future performance is past performance. So in considering will they actually do it, will they actually do the things they say in the Speech from the Throne that they intend to do in this respect, and will the private member's resolution actually ever be given any effect, maybe. Maybe not, probably not.

If you go back and consider the best predictor of future performance is past performance. If somebody asks you to do something and you

say, yes, and if you are in the habit of being good for your word, then you will probably do it. If you have been in the habit of making promises and not following up on those promises, then a person can realistically assume you might not do it.

So, I have gone back and looked at the Speech from the Throne from 2007; 2007 is the year of the Green report which says rebuilding confidence. This was after the House of Assembly MHA spending scandal. It predates most of the members here, but it was a very important report. It took ten months for Mr. Justice J. Derek Green to prepare the report and it is quite substantive.

If you look from 2007 forward of the things that the government has said in the Speech from the Throne, remember that this resolution is taken from the current 2015 Speech from the Throne. So eight years ago in the Speech from the Throne the government said, "The first challenge, restoring fiscal integrity, has been a difficult exercise; but together as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians under My Government's responsible leadership, we have worked to wrestle our public finances from the pull of decline and place Newfoundland and Labrador securely on the path to fiscal freedom."

This year we are facing a \$1 billion deficit, so where are we eight years afterwards from 2007 to 2015? That is what they said eight years ago on that particular issue.

On another issue they say, "My Government this fall will bring together all regional and provincial council members of the Rural Secretariat, the three orders of Government and seniors public official for a fully-interactive conference under the theme 'Visions to Actions: A Roadmap to 2020.' Together, those who know rural issues best will chart the best course forward, region by region, initiative by bold initiative."

Mr. Speaker, the current Budget that was kicked off by the Speech from the Throne says that we will be in a deficit until 2020. So what this 2007 document is saying that we are going to be achieving by 2020 is completely undone. In

fact, we are proposed under the current Budget to run five more deficits.

Government goes on to say, “Our fishing industry has long been a mainstay of rural Newfoundland and Labrador and, despite challenges in recent decades, it remains a beacon of opportunity.” Well, Mr. Speaker, the decline in the fishery has been absolutely staggering and the decline for rural communities, in particular, has been really shattering for these rural communities, generally smaller communities but not always smaller communities.

If you continue on in the 2007 Speech from the Throne, government said, “Education is an economic growth issue, but a social justice issue as well. We as a society have an obligation to ensure citizens have the opportunity to harness their individual strengths and achieve their potential. Personal self-reliance is an issue of basic human dignity for young and old. We must work collectively to empower our citizens to enjoy the rewards of self-reliance.”

Mr. Speaker, we know that education has been in decline every year since this government took power. We were more or less the middle of the pack in Canada on the international testing, the PISA scores, a dozen years ago. Today, we are second or third from the bottom. Sometimes we are can nudge out Prince Edward Island. Sometimes we can beat Manitoba, but we have managed to slide just about to the bottom of the scale in spite of government having these bold and forthright and substantive claims of what it was going to do.

In 2007 they also said, “A key determinant of one’s quality of life is one’s personal health. We owe it to ourselves to embrace healthy living and support it as we best can.” Yet, only a few months ago there was an absolute reign of protest when a commentator, a travel writer from another nation, referred to how many people we have overweight and we know that 10 per cent or 11 per cent of our population suffers from Type 2 diabetes. If eight years ago we had really been focusing on what we said we were going to focus on, maybe the results would have been better.

What I am saying is the Speech from the Throne is one thing. Private members’ resolutions –

generally government resolutions are feel-good resolutions. If you look at the 2008 Speech from the Throne they say, “Our forestry sector, which has weathered particularly tough challenges, will benefit from the implementation of the provincially-funded and independently-produced forest sector strategy report.”

They say, “Initiatives advanced under this strategy will reflect My Government’s appreciation of the immense value of our forest industry and a strong conviction that this industry does indeed have a sustainable future in Newfoundland and Labrador over the long term.”

However, under this government, when this government came to power we had three paper mills; we have lost two out of three paper mills. They have invested in a pellet plant in Roddickton; there is \$10 million or \$11 million or \$12 million gone. Negotiations seem to be falling apart with a company called Rentech. Even though we have lots of trees, lots of fibre, this government does not seem to be able to mobilize to be able to get positive results whatsoever.

The Speech from the Throne each year goes forward and says what they are going to do this year. What they are saying now in lifting these thirty-two words out of this private member’s resolution, put into the PMR that says that they are going to reform the House of Assembly. Well, it is not a bad idea, it is a good idea; but will they actually do it? I doubt it. Simply, there is not time enough – if it is this government, which is an old, tired government, long in the tooth government, a government that is really failing in the polls. They are grasping for a solution. They are grasping for something to take to the voters.

Now if you look at how boldly they write the Speeches from the Throne, in 2009 the theme was Captaining Our Own Ship and Weathering Every Storm. This one was Growing Our Economy for Self-reliance, but have we grown our economy for self-reliance? I think not, given the issues that we are facing today.

In the 2009 Speech from the Throne this government referenced, “Still, our province’s fishing industry generates 24,000 jobs and

hundreds of millions in returns year after year.” Well, Mr. Speaker, it is well established that the fishing industry today only employs 17,000 or 18,000 people. So we have lost approximately 25 per cent of the people involved in the industry in the last six years. How can that be any sort of a record of success that will make you believe that anything they would say today in a private member’s resolution is going to work?

Mr. Speaker, in the 2011 Speech from the Throne the big flaw of this government’s performance became apparent. Even though for the past while, the past several months they have been saying well, nobody could forecast the price of oil, in the Speech from the Throne in 2011 they said, “Global oil price increases will ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians reap even greater benefits from our province’s equity participation in projects offshore. My Government’s foresight is certainly paying off. Thanks to its extraordinary leadership, Newfoundland and Labrador is becoming the principal beneficiary of our offshore oil riches.”

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this was only four years ago when government was saying how all of the increases in oil prices would keep this government solvent. In fact, we know that oil prices have declined. It was reckless, foolhardy, and short sighted to have been talking four years ago about how oil prices would keep on going up.

Oil prices likely will go back up again at some point, but they relied on oil prices continuing to escalate from 2011 forward. In fact, they spent as if somebody who was doing their budget at Christmastime would take into account all of the overtime they expected to work for the rest of the year, for the coming year, and say this is how much I made last year and this is how much overtime I expect to get, this is the raise that I think I am going to get. Then they turnaround on the January 1 or 2 and they get laid off. Now they have a massive budget, far too many commitments, and now they have to pay for it on EI. That is really where they are left today.

Mr. Speaker, there is Speech after Speech after Speech from the Throne. You see this government said – in 2012 they refer back to the 2011 Blue Book which says, “Our commitment

to fiscal sustainability is firm. In implementing the commitments identified in this Blue Book and in fulfilling our responsibilities as a government, we will ensure annual provincial expenditures do not grow beyond the level our economy can sustain.” My government stands by these words.

Well, obviously they have not. They continue to grow the cost of government, grow the size of government, expenses got out of control. Today, we are facing potentially the largest deficit that this Province has ever faced, maybe as much as a billion dollars, although I suspect with the sort of shell games the Minister of Finance has been playing recently, we probably will come in under that number.

They conclude in the 2012 Speech from the Throne, “The Best is Yet to Come. Newfoundland and Labrador is ideally positioned to achieve growth the like of which the province has never seen and few in the province ever imagined.”

AN HON. MEMBER: What year was that?

MR. J. BENNETT: This is the Speech from the Throne, three years ago.

They conclude saying, “Considering how far we have come already, we are right to be optimistic, right to be confident and right to believe that the best is indeed yet to come for Newfoundland and Labrador.” This is three years ago when they were forecasting over \$100 a barrel for oil. When you put all of your faith in the price of oil, it certainly ends up with a substantial shortfall from time to time.

In the 2013 Speech from the Throne they say, “More people are working in our province today than ever before in our history. With 70,000 job openings on the horizon thanks to the Muskrat Falls development and other important initiatives, people are moving here.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not see people moving here. I see people telephoning me or emailing me on a daily basis saying, how can I get a job at Muskrat Falls? Because I am qualified, I cannot get on. I have to leave my family and move to Alberta. People are coming back from Alberta

because of the downturn in oil prices and we are absolutely strapped financially –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is indeed a privilege to get up again today to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: In my few words I am going to have here today, the hon. member who was just up, I was going to say something kind about him but I am kind of debating now whether I am going to do that or not. I probably will.

Mr. Speaker, he talked about the past and talked about everything that is on the go, but what we are talking about here today is the present. What we are talking about is what our Premier has decided to do with this House of Assembly. Some people never, ever thought we would be doing what we are doing because I am sure that while everybody came up with the idea of reducing seats and everything else, there is nobody who came up with the idea to say let's do it now.

Everyone was looking at doing it down the road; let's look at it in five years' time. There are a lot of things that could happen in five years' time. I am glad I am part of a government that said, listen, if we are going to do this, let's do it now because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to get into that part later on. I did not want to start off like that, but I want to start off with the importance of our jobs. I know as an MHA I really take my job and understand that I am representing the district, I

am representing my constituents, and I want to represent them to the best of my ability. I am sure that everybody in here on both sides of the House want to do what is right for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the reason we get elected and that is the reason we put our names forward to be elected. That is part of it.

When I look at different committees, and as I am here now seven years, I have seen some changes. In the last year I can say I have seen the most changes. I have never seen changes – I know just a while ago we had a private member's motion here that we have an All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and we did. It was the first time in seven years that I have ever seen it.

We also had an all-party committee when it came to the shrimp allocations. We had a committee set up from all parties – and this is the way it should work – to go to Ottawa and fight for the cause of the shrimp fishery and make sure that we were getting treated fairly.

That is the same thing we are doing with the mental health and addictions. I mean, we do have issues. There are families I am sure affected here in the House of Assembly, and there are families all over Newfoundland and Labrador. We want the best for our loved ones. We want to make sure that if there is help out there, we can guide somebody, or we can give some kind of advice, or we can give some kind of a treatment to. We have done that. We have set up treatment centres. I think in Grand Falls there is a new treatment centre, a new one in Paradise, and a new one in Harbour Grace. So we have been doing that.

This all-party committee takes it to another level. That is what we should be doing. I think that is what this amendment is all about. We are not talking about the past, we are talking about what we need to do in the future to make the House of Assembly the best it can be so we represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador the best.

That is what this amendment is about today, making sure that – listen, let's do the reforms. I agree with the Opposition Member for St. George's – Stephenville East, take the politics out of it. You are right, take the politics out of

it. It is not about politics. It is about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is about representing our district. It is about representing the people to make sure they get the best possible service that they can, and we give them what we can and represent them the best we can. I agree with that.

The hon. Member for St. Barbe just got up that time and spoke about all the different speeches and everything else. To me, this is about today. This is about what our Premier said he was going to do and this is what we are doing here today.

There has been a committee set up – and it is not like this is a broken promise. There has been a committee set up. I believe the Member for St. John's South is on it, I believe the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi is on it, I believe our House Leader is on it, and the Minister of Finance is on this committee. I think you have met already. You are looking at the different reforms that we do here in the House of Assembly, and that is important.

I am glad that it is all parties that are going to be involved in it. Do you know what? There are things that have to change in this House, and there is no doubt about it. We all see it and we all know because we want what is best for the constituents of Newfoundland and Labrador. I want what is the best for my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I have been here seven years and I had the opportunity – and it is a committee I sit on. I sit on it. It is the Public Accounts Committee. I have to say the first couple of years I sat on Public Accounts we did not do a big lot at all. We had one or two meetings every year. The Auditor General would come in and give us his report, and go through the report with us and everything else. We would have a meeting. We would look at it and send some letters to departments and stuff like that, but probably two or three meetings.

In the last couple of years – not very often, I usually throw jabs over that way, but I have to give the hon. Member for St. Barbe credit. He is the Chair of the Public Accounts and he is doing a real good job. He really is doing a good job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I have learned a lot from Public Accounts.

AN HON. MEMBER: Stand up, stand up.

MR. K. PARSONS: I would ask him to stand up but he does not want to stand up. That is okay.

Mr. Speaker, on the Public Accounts Committee, and it is a great Committee in government because we do call in different – last year I think there were six. We would pick out – there were thirteen, and there are members opposite who sit on that Committee and they would have to agree – there were six we called in last year. We looked at thirteen different recommendations that came back from the Auditor General. Then there were six different ones, so we said, okay, we sent letters out to the departments. It is departments and it is private industry. We talked to health care boards and education. We called them in and we had questions.

At the end of the day we wrote a report, and the report came back to the House of Assembly. You know it made those accountable. It made all of those agencies, whether it was a department – we did the Western school board. Another one we did was Eastern Health. That was pretty interesting. We had three days of hearings here in the House of Assembly asking a lot of questions.

It is a great opportunity for the Opposition parties too, because they get to ask really hard questions. If there is something there, they can ask it. This is a Committee that works. It never worked five or six years ago, but it is working today. I have to say, I am very proud to be on that Committee.

I just want to touch on committees. They are great things. We do need to set up more of them. Whether it comes to legislation, what legislation is coming forward. I agree with members who say when legislation comes we do not have enough time to really digest what is in the legislation as backbenchers. Now obviously, departments, they have a general idea of what is on the go, but for us, we do need a little bit – and it would be nice to have committees look at

legislation. There may be some ways that we could adjust.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk a little bit about – this is important for the public to know, that there is compensation. This is part of the reform that people do not – no one mentioned it yet today, but there is compensation here in the House of Assembly. Members get compensated for the extra work they do, and so they should. There is no problem at all, they should be compensated.

I praised up the Member for St. Barbe. He is the Chair. He gets compensated for it. There is a Co-Chair; he gets compensated for it. People get compensated so much a day. There are Opposition members here. You have your House Leader, and then you have your Deputy House Leader. You have your Whip, and you have your caucus Chair. The Third Party is in the same boat. They have three members over there. They have a caucus Chair and a Whip –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: No Whip?

That is it, Whip and caucus Chair. Okay, so that is what they have. All of these are compensated under the House of Assembly.

What this new committee is going to look at is seeing if that level of compensation is too much, or maybe it is too little, I do not know. I know the Premier spoke about that maybe we should be looking at compensating people. Other than the Public Accounts, these are things people get compensated for while the House is sitting.

I think part of what the reform committee is looking for – they are going to be looking at and saying, okay, perhaps we should do this. If they are sitting for so many days a year, then we compensate them for while they are sitting. If they are not sitting, you do not compensate them. That is part of what they are looking at.

The general public have to know that people do get compensated for what they do. Now it is a little different on, say, the government side. I sit on the Public Accounts Committee and I am Parliamentary Secretary. I do not get compensated for the Public Accounts Committee

because I am already Parliamentary Secretary. There is no double-dipping, what you would say. A person could do two or three jobs, but you only get for one.

For example, on our side here, the Deputy House Leader and the House Leader, both of those do not get compensated for those jobs because they are already ministers. Just to let you know, it is not added on, but on the other side they do get compensated. I am not saying that they should not, but the public has to know that is what is reformed here. So you cannot double-dip or anything like that.

What this committee is going to do is look at all aspects of the House of Assembly. It is time we did it. Our Premier said from day one, I am going in there, we are going to look at the House of Assembly, we are going to look how it runs, and make sure that it runs better. That is what this is all about.

This motion today is about making sure the House of Assembly runs and does its job, whether it is setting up committees or whatever. I am going to go back now to how I started off when we talked about the districts. When we were up on Bill 42 – we all came back here and talked about Bill 42, reducing seats, and whatever. Reducing seats; I am sure as we look at it now, people are saying I did not think this was going to happen. On both sides of the House there is no one who can say that this is all done to affect this party or that party. All parties are affected by this.

I had a lady call me the other day. I never knew her until I got into politics, but since I got into politics she is a regular caller to me. She just vents a little bit. They are nice conversations we have all the time. She said: Kevin, if it happens the way it goes and you are gone out of my district; you will always be my MHA.

I think that is the part where a lot of MHA are affected here. You represent people for a number of years. I can understand an MHA not wanting to lose organizations and people who supported them. Come election time I know that I appreciate every person who comes out and puts a sign on their lawn or makes phone calls for me. Whether they vote for me or not, whatever it is, we do have constituents out there.

This reform that is happening now is not easy on anyone. I know that the Opposition members, most of them, have gone to the hearings and voiced the way they would like to see things happen. It is the way it is and that is what we have to live with. Do you know what? The biggest thing about it all, Mr. Speaker, is that it is the right thing to do.

If you look at all over Canada and look at what people have, the number of constituents who are in every other province in Canada, how many people it takes for one representative – Newfoundland and Labrador is different than all over Canada. I would not live in any other place. It is the best Province there is. When you look at the number of constituents versus the number of MHAs we have to come down. In order to represent the number of people – I think 13,500 is where we are. Even that puts us at the third or fourth lowest in all of Canada.

I listened to some people talk about cost savings. Oh, that is the cost savings. You are on a \$7 billion Budget and they are only saving \$2.5 million a year. Mr. Speaker, \$2.5 million a year for a lot of years is a lot of money. Mr. Speaker, \$2.5 million for ten years is \$25 million. It can build a school, it can help us with our health care, and it can help us with our education. It is what we should be doing.

This reform that we are talking about here today is making this place better. It is giving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador better representation and giving good representation. I do not think for one second that – whether my district changes or anybody else's district changes – MHAs are not going to work as hard. Some work harder than others. Some work really hard. It depends on where you are. If I look at parts of my district, I can say that probably in one community I get more calls than I do in another community. That changes. So whether you work hard for one part of it or whatever, everybody is different, every community is different.

Rural Newfoundland; you live in a town that has its own snow clearing and they take care of their roads. Obviously you do not hear from them when there are snow clearing issues, but you are there to represent the whole district. I think by reducing it down by eight seats to forty seats,

while it does affect a lot of people in here, it is the right thing to do.

This whole motion that we brought forward today – and like I said, it is not to bring the politics into it, but you have to bring what is getting done in this legislation. We have seen it in the last number of months. Since our Premier has been elected, he made some promises and these promises he stuck to.

He told us that we would have a health care reform committee set up, we would have a consultation with everyone across the Province, and we had it. He said we will reform what we are doing when it came to – with a great announcement we made today – municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador and making sure that they are fairly treated. I think the announcement today was fantastic. I talked to the mayors in my district. They are all really, really pleased with the extra funding they are getting.

This is about making promises and keeping your promises. This is what the promise was today, that we are going to reform the House of Assembly and make it a better place for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is exactly what we are doing. That is why with this motion today I am hoping everyone will support it and say it is the right thing to do. Reduce the seats down to forty. It is going to affect some people. Bring in committees.

I do not have much time, but the other thing was looking at pensions. I understand pensions are a big issue for everyone out there. If you look at what this government has done when it comes to pensions, no one ever thought that the public service would be agreeing with us and settling pensions. Just last week guess what we have done? The teachers are in. Mr. Speaker, 91 per cent of the teachers came forward and said we agree with pension reform that this government is doing.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: We are doing a great job.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to have my turn to speak to the private member's motion that is before us today. A motion put forward by the government side of the House. A motion that I would like to say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – I find rather disingenuous. In the actual resolution, the government has lumped together in this private member's motion – we know it is an individual who brings it forward, but we know he is representing the position of the government. They put a number of things together and are asking for us to vote on these reforms, as they put it, in a package.

The thing is, while there are some things in the resolution that we agree with, there are other things that we do not. I find this terrible because when we vote against it, it is going to be said that we are voting against things in the resolution that we are for. We are on the record as saying, yes, we agree that we have to look at our MHA pensions. The Management Commission is already dealing with that and we are looking at the process for getting that to happen. That is nothing new. That was not something that this Premier brought in. We have been talking about this since 2011. We wanted the Committee that looked at our compensation to look at the pensions and they sent back to the Management Commission no, you have to put a process in place. You have to get everything ready if you want a group of people to work on this, an outside group, because it has to be an outside group that will work on it.

This is not new; this is not something that this Premier brought in. This is something the Management Commission has been working on in the name of the Members of the House of Assembly because the Management

Commission is accountable to the Members of the House of Assembly.

So that is nothing new, and I firmly stand behind it. We all know that there are things in here that are problematic. Now, I have to point out the spirit of this resolution seems to be to have a Legislature that is open and transparent and we do have in the first WHEREAS – and I note that neither the amendment nor the WHEREASes are voted on yet, so I am going to speak to all of it because the amendment has been made but it has not been voted on. The first WHEREAS talks about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserving to be served by the most progressive Legislature in the country. So obviously it is a Legislature that the motion is speaking to.

I have to say that I find it rather interesting that this government is saying they believe in the most progressive Legislature in the country that they can put together, yet they have in the resolution itself something that was brought into this House in the most undemocratic process I have ever seen, and that has to do with reducing the number of seats.

We all know that we were in this House in January and we were talking about the electoral boundaries commission and the way in which this government forced a decision in this House to take action that went around our democratic process. We have legislation that has a set time for reviews to be made of our boundaries. In our legislation, 1996 was year for a review, 2006 was a year for a review, and 2016 was a year for review; but this government decided oh no, we are going to force something to happen prior to the general election in 2015. We are going to change the legislation, put a whole set of clauses in for the year 2015 only and after 2015, revert to the legislation and 2016 will become the benchmark so 2026 will be when the next review is.

Talk about manipulation of legislation to suit their needs. Here they are talking about having an open and transparent process, having a Legislature that is open to greater scrutiny – even though I noticed in the motion it says opening the legislation to greater scrutiny, I think they mean the Legislature to greater scrutiny. Opening it to greater scrutiny, having a Legislature that is the most progressive in the

country and then putting in the motion an action that was as undemocratic as one could get and taking away from a boundaries commission the power that they should have had to do an analysis of whether or not cutting the number of seats indeed was a reform.

This is something that has been –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS MICHAEL: I invite the member who is speaking to listen to what I am going to say because they were so smart about not listening to us during Bill 29 that they had to come back with Bill 1 into this House. Listen to what I am saying now, I say to him, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS MICHAEL: Yes, forty-five of you may have voted for it, but people out there who were studying what was happening talked about how undemocratic it was and they talked about the fact that lowering the number of seats for the sake of doing it meant less representation in this House, which was undemocratic. So, you did not listen to experts around Bill 29 and you did not listen to experts around the electoral boundaries commission either, I say to them, Mr. Speaker.

They do not like hearing that there are people who disagree with what they do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: When they ask us today to vote for this omnibus resolution, because that is what it is – and I will credit a member of the Official Opposition who sort of said that and I am saying it, having heard it said, because that is what it is – putting into the resolution some things that I agree with and we as the caucus agree with, but then something else like the cutting of seats and doing it in the context of the bill that was passed here in this House in January and it has been spoken to by the Opposition.

It just does not mean in a general way reducing the number of seats, they mean reducing the

number of seats – by the decision they made here in January – by eight seats without any discussion, without any consultation, forcing an electoral boundaries commission to do that, putting them in the situation that we see in the Province right now as the Commission is going around hearing what people have to say. People in rural Newfoundland, as we knew, in January are not happy with what is happening, something that was forced by this government. I love the way in which they use all this fancy language as in the resolution when their actions do not do what the language says.

Let's talk a bit too about the other point that I think is an important point. I was delighted to hear our colleague across the way, the Member for Cape St. Francis, talk as he did about all-party committees. Some of the stuff, I thought he read my notes. Some of the things that he said were things that I had in my notes about all-party committees. I want to speak, though, to the full picture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: It is true that we have the all-party committee on mental health, but it is not because we have in our structure, in the way we practice it, all-party committees that are standing committees and operate all the time when it comes to policy issues.

If the Member for St. John's Centre had not brought in the private member's motion, we would not have an all-party committee on mental health. They were forced to vote for it. They were set to not vote for it going into the discussion that day, but by the end they knew the pressure was on them. The pressure came from outside of this House during that debate as well and they voted for it.

So we do not have an all-party committee because this government has this wonderful belief in standing all-party committees. If they were really serious about opening up, whether it is the Legislature, to greater scrutiny, or how we look at legislation to greater scrutiny, then they would have in this motion –

MR. KENT: A point of order.

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

MR. KENT: I hope members of the Opposition take offence as well. For the member to suggest that we somehow were convinced to take part in the all-party committee process is disgusting. It shows disrespect for the process that we have agreed to and we are all participating in. It is disrespectful to the process that we are participating in together and I think she should withdraw the remarks.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

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

The point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that we have an all-party committee not because

MR. KENT: (Inaudible) dishonest.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS MICHAEL: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker; did I hear what I think I just heard?

A point of order, I think I heard a word being said that I was being dishonest, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the point of order?

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, she will not withdraw her remarks, but I will withdraw mine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

On a point of order, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: I think what I heard when the member said that what I had said needed to be

withdrawn, you said there was no point of order so there is nothing for me to withdraw. I would like to make that point.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

I recognize the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, to continue.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now here is the point I am trying to make that he does not want to acknowledge: That we do not have an all-party committee on mental health and we do not have an all-party committee on the shrimp industry either because the ideas came from the other side of the House. That is point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker.

If they were really committed to having a real, open Legislature –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – and a process whereby we could really openly discuss legislation, discuss legislation in an open way while the legislation is being developed –

Mr. Speaker, I want order –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

While I respect the fact that many different people have many differing opinions, the day is getting late and we would like to move on with the motion. I ask for the accommodation of all members.

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi.

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

If we had an openness to really have legislation fully discussed, we would not have things rushed through. That is what I liked when I heard the Member for Cape St. Francis – he talked about the fact that we do rush through legislation in this House. That is when I said he

read my notes. I was delighted to hear him say it and I hope he is going to say it in his caucus and say it to his Cabinet members. Because the reason we just rush things through is because we do not have a process for real consultation before the legislation gets voted on, before it even comes into second reading.

Do what happens in other Legislatures: sit down, let us really look at the piece of legislation; bring in witnesses to speak to the legislation; bring in various points of view; make sure here – not just inside of a department because what goes on inside of a department of government is not open. When you have an all-party committee that is looking at a piece of legislation, that is open and transparent, and that is what we are asking for.

I do not see that in this motion either, Mr. Speaker. That is why I will not be voting for the motion. There are things in it I like, but there is something in particular in it that I do not like and there are things that are missing. If this government really wants to have a Legislature where we are being effective then we will have all-party committees, standing committees, not to have to fight for a special committee but have standing committees that deal with social policy, standing committees – not just at the time of Estimates but standing committees that deal with our natural resources; standing committees that deal with government services; and then legislation comes to those committees when it is a major piece of legislation.

We do not have to have every little piece of legislation go to an all-party committee for open scrutiny because some of them are just housekeeping; but when it is a new piece of legislation, a major change to legislation, go to the standing committee.

If this resolution had included really making our standing committees on policy, real standing committees that could behave the way our Standing Orders say they behave, then I would be able to vote for this, Mr. Speaker.

I am very disappointed that government has done what they have done in bringing forward a resolution, some of which I could vote for – and I want that on the record. It is on the record – it is in Hansard – that some of it I could vote for,

some of it I have already voted for; but not to vote for something that has been slipped in here that we did not vote for in January, we will not vote for now and to leave out something that is so important as setting up really operative standing all-party committees on policy issues.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the Member for Labrador West speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of those who joined in the debate today. It was some lively debate there. I would like to thank the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East, Port au Port, Cape St. Francis, St. Barbe, and Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

I listened to them all intently and I have to say, the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East had some very good comments over there, made some good points, talked about the comparison of our Legislature with other Legislatures across the country and timing. He talked about Question Periods and the formats of the Question Periods. He talked about the timing allotted for Question Periods. That is exactly what this motion is all about. It is all about reforming and improving how the Legislature works. I thought that the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East made some very good points.

I also agree with taking the politics out of the motion. So, I agree with your amendment that you put forward; I think it is a good amendment.

The Member for Port au Port talked about moving ahead and I think he focused more on how some people are changing their minds and the nervousness of how it is going to affect different districts, how it is going to affect different MHAs, and where you go from there, and finding a happy medium there.

The Member for St. Barbe – well, the Member for St. Barbe is the Member for St. Barbe, and that is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. MCGRATH: I am sorry, but I guess growing up I was always told if you have nothing good to say, say nothing. So I am going to say nothing, and I leave it there.

I always enjoy listening to the Member for Cape St. Francis speak. Because the Member for Cape St. Francis, when he speaks, he speaks from here. He very rarely uses notes. He will have bullets, he will read his information, but when he speaks he speaks from the heart. I think that is important. I find when he speaks he is very grounded, and that is where he was today. He commented on some of the other members who talked about the past – and I should compliment the Member for St. Barbe for studying the Speeches from the Throne for the last twelve years, because that was the only thing he really spoke about.

The Member for Cape St. Francis emphasized it is not about the past; it is about the future. It is about moving forward; it is about moving forward in a positive light. That is the whole purpose of this motion: that we can look now, see where we are, and see how we can move forward more effectively, more efficiently. So, I thank the Member for Cape St. Francis for his comments.

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, I just want to make – we spoke earlier during the session. There is a word in the last sentence of the motion as it was put forward, and that word is legislation. We debated whether it should be Legislature or legislation – you did speak on it. So I just want to make it clear that it is supposed to be legislation, because the Legislature is where we bring legislation forward, and that is what that sentence means. It is the legislation that we bring forward in the Legislature. So, I did do a little research on it this afternoon, and it is supposed to be legislation. I appreciate you bringing that to my attention, but I agree that as it is written is how it should be.

You spoke quite a bit about committees. I have often heard the Third Party talk about

committees, talk about all-party committees, and talk about standing committees. For some reason, even when you put committees in place, whether they are all-party committees, whether they are standing committees, it is all about taking the glory of putting that committee there. That is not what this resolution is about. This resolution is about moving forward.

I was sort of a little disappointed I guess that you had to try and get the point across that we, we, we, as the Third Party, here is what we are doing, and here is what we have done. Even as a government, when we try to work together –

MS MICHAEL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Vidi on a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: (Inaudible) it is written that a party cannot take credit for the work it does. The resolution put forward by the government does nothing but take credit for what the Premier has done and what we, we, we have done.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

Even when as a government and as a House of Assembly we work together in all-party committees, focusing on that, we, is a little bit disturbing. I am going to leave that there. I feel that the motion put forward, this motion is about moving forward.

This motion is about reforming the House of Assembly to be a better House of Assembly, to be more efficient, to be more effective, and in doing that, serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in a better way.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I again thank everybody who did join in the debate today. I look forward to their support on this motion.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

MR. SPEAKER: Shall the resolution, as amended, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

On motion, resolution, as amended, carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Summon the members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

Order, please!

Shall the resolution as amended carry?

All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK: Mr. Davis, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Dalley, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Sandy

Collins, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Granter, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Cross, Ms Perry, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Russell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Joyce, Ms Cathy Bennett, Mr. Jim Bennett, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Lane, Mr. Reid, Mr. Hillier, Mr. Flynn.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please stand.

CLERK: Ms Michael, Ms Rogers.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes thirty-nine, the nays two.

MR. SPEAKER: The resolution, as amended, has passed.

This being Private Members' Day and the business of the House concluded, we now stand adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, Budget Day, at 2:00 p.m.