



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

FIRST SESSION

Number 50

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Tuesday

29 November 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today we welcome to the Speaker's gallery Ms. Donna Hawco and members of her team, who are with the group Circle of Friends and will be the subject of a Member's statement today.

We also welcome to the Speaker's gallery Mr. Brendan Paddick, Mr. John Green and Mr. Christopher Hickman who will be the subject of a Ministerial Statement today.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the District of Labrador West, the District of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, the District of Harbour Main, the District of Cape St. Francis, the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, and the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

The hon. the Member for the District of Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Wabush Volunteer Fire Department on another successful year.

This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending their 54th Annual Volunteer Firefighter's Ball where many members were recognized for their volunteer service to the Wabush Fire Department. Most noteworthy, Assistant Chief Leonard Snow and Captain Kenneth Snow were both recognized for 35 years of service and were presented with their provincial certificates. Both firefighters continue to be valuable members and mentors for the department.

Under the direction of Chief Todd Canning, the Wabush Fire Department consists of 20 volunteer members, three of whom are female. Training continues to be a priority for the department and with the recent forest fires in the

region, that training has certainly been put to the test.

As stated in the Firefighter's Pledge, where a firefighter promises concern, courage, strength, wisdom, compassion and love to serve unselfishly whenever called, the volunteer members of the Wabush Fire Department can stand very proud.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Wabush Fire Department and all firefighters across Newfoundland and Labrador for the great service they provide in keeping our communities and our people safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It isn't unusual that we rise in this House to honour the hardworking young people who earn Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Today, though, I have the pleasure of honouring not one but four Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award winners who received their awards at the most recent ceremony. Even more unusually, those four outstanding youth are siblings.

That's correct, Mr. Speaker. The four children of Ron and Paula Ellsworth have now all received their gold awards – at a ceremony this July when Her Royal Highness Princess Anne came to town.

The four Ellsworths are Michael, who is 25 and has graduated from Memorial with a bachelor of commerce; 24-year-old Stephanie, who is a second-year medical student at Memorial; Maria, who is 22 and working on the last year of her Memorial education degree; and 18-year-old Christine, who is attending university in Nova Scotia working on an animal science degree.

Proud father Ron is now the provincial President for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and no doubt looks forward to encouraging more youth

to follow his own family doing program work that challenges them and strengthens them.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the award-winning Ellsworth family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Harbour Main.

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize an outstanding group for the Conception Bay Centre area whose efforts have helped raise over \$180,000 for breast cancer research over 15 years.

The Circle of Friends group, based in the Town of Avondale, has been participating in the CIBC Run for the Cure since 2001. Under the direction of Team Captain Donna Hawco, these outstanding family members, friends, neighbours and community members come together each year to help raise funds to support research science to find a cure for breast cancer.

Ms. Hawco, who is a breast cancer survivor herself, takes on the initiative on a volunteer basis, as do all the other members to support this worthy cause. Although they have sadly lost some of their members to this terrible disease, which will affect one in nine Canadians during their lifetime, they press on through it all to support the research we all need to help end this terrible disease, which has touched the lives of all of us in one way or another.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating and celebrating the Circle of Friends group for the amazing work they do for this worthy cause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Outer Cove men's rowing crew, championship winners at the 2016 Royal St. John's Regatta, the oldest continuing sporting evening in North America. This team trained hard in the gym and on the ergs; in May, they hit the pond every day, doing drills and practising in all kinds of weather.

My district had several teams competing in the Regatta with great success. The Outer Cove crew was led by Coach Bert Hickey, Manager Mike Power and crew members were: Brent Hickey, James and Daniel Cadigan, Mark Perry, Brent Payne, Colin Stapleton, coxswain Mark Hayward, and spare Craig Whittle.

Also, I'd like to acknowledge the Town of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove for ensuring the Outer Cove name stays in tradition with the pond. The team was sponsored by the town, and the team took great pride in rowing under the Outer Cove name.

Their goal was simple: Put in the hard work, bring the people to the pond and keep the tradition of rowing and interest in the Regatta alive. Their goal is to bring home a record as they train for the 200th anniversary in 2018.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating the Outer Cove men's rowing crew and wish them the best in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to recognize the 19th annual Festival of Lights in the Town of Bay Roberts. Each year, with the help of volunteers, the town holds an opening ceremony at the Wilbur Sparkes Recreation Complex, with traditional carols and fireworks to launch the festival.

A schedule of holiday events can be found on the town's website. The community of Port de Grave is also gearing up for the 18th annual boat lighting, which is scheduled for December 9 at 7 p.m. at marginal wharf.

Mr. Eric Lear was the first local fish harvester to light up his boat in 1995. In the following years, resident Joyce Morgan, along with others, decided to make it a group event, a tradition Port de Grave is now known for, which creates a Christmas glow in the night sky like no other.

People from all over come to see the dozens of decorated boats. Christmas in Port de Grave has long been associated with this attraction, which many call the official kickoff to the holidays in Conception Bay North.

I invite everyone to come see the lights this Christmas, and a special thank you to everyone who help make it brighter each year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to Latonia Hartery of Bay d'Espoir, recipient of the CBC Emerging Artist Award for 2015.

The award-winning director, field manager, producer and writer has achieved wonderful success with her work on CBC documentaries, *DOC ZONE* and our treasured *Land and Sea*. As director of two episodes, “The Last Sardine Outpost” and “Rum Running”, viewers savoured her efforts evidenced by some of the highest ratings in the program’s history.

Latonia’s credits also include three independent short films – *Escape Routes*, *Wind Money* and *Sadie*, a historic thriller set in rural Newfoundland. *Sadie* has been shown in 18 festivals worldwide and was also named best Newfoundland film at the Nickel Film Festival, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Latonia. We have no doubt that Bay d'Espoir’s native daughter will continue to make us all extremely proud as she showcases her directing, producing and writing talents, whether in her own feature, *Teflon Dons* or

production of Wanda Nolan’s *Crocuses* or upcoming documentaries. Please view her remarkable work if you have not done so already and keep your eye on this emerging artist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce appointments to the board of directors of Nalcor Energy based on a list of recommendations provided by the Independent Appointments Commission.

The board’s new chair is Brendan Paddick, who was born in Grand Falls-Windsor and is a renowned CEO and corporate director. He is the founder and former chairman and chief executive officer of Columbus International Inc., a diversified telecommunications company which merged in March 2015 with Cable & Wireless Communications PLC in a transaction that valued Columbus at over \$4.4 billion Canadian. In November 2015, Liberty Global PLC announced a transaction to acquire Cable & Wireless for an enterprise value of approximately \$11.1 billion Canadian.

Mr. Paddick has accumulated many awards during his career, including being named one of Canada’s Top 40 Under 40 in 2000 and Ernst & Young’s Atlantic Canadian Business-to-Business Entrepreneur of the Year in 2011.

In addition to Mr. Paddick, I welcome the following outstanding appointments to the board: John Green, Q.C.; Ann Marie Hann; Christopher Hickman; Jack Hillyard; Mark MacLeod; Brian Maynard; Debbie Molloy; David Oake; Dr. Edna Turpin; and Stan Marshall.

Collectively, these directors have a wealth of knowledge, experience and competency in such areas as corporate governance, audit, finance, law and business management. As a board, they

will help develop Nalcor Energy and all its lines of business in the best interest of the province. Also, to add to the depth and breadth of the board, the Independent Appointments Commission has been asked to bring forward additional recommendations of persons for consideration by government who have an intimate knowledge and understanding of Labrador issues and Indigenous people.

I would like to thank the interim board for the work they have done over the past several months. I would also like to thank the Independent Appointments Commission. Together, we are ensuring Nalcor Energy has a highly qualified board of directors to realize maximum benefit to the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just received the statement, so I had little time to review it in the last few minutes. We're certainly pleased to see there's a new permanent board in place to continue the operations of the province's Crown corporation, Nalcor, and derive the benefits from our natural resources.

On first blush, it appears the individuals selected for the board indeed have a number of competencies and a whole range of competencies and build a great deal of knowledge to their positions.

As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I feel it's imperative that you must have a common goal of ensuring that our provincial investments will provide success and benefits for years to come, as we, as the prior administration, did through our Energy Plan that reflected all elements of our energy resources.

I certainly look forward to the new board taking on this initiative and further success for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the copy, although we haven't had too much time to look at it. I'm happy to join with her in congratulating the new appointees. I'm glad we finally have them at last, and to wish them well and thank them for taking it on.

Muskrat Falls is bankrupting the province. The PUB has outlined serious management issues at Nalcor. These people have a lot of work to do and not much time to do it in. I do wish them well in their work.

I have to say to the minister, these are wonderful appointees, but I would have liked to have seen better gender balance in 2016.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agrifoods.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to present yesterday at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, as part of the committee's review of the *Federal Fisheries Act*.

The federal government is reviewing amendments which were made to the act in 2012-2013 by the previous administration. This review will determine what changes may be needed to protect fish habitat and ensure modern safeguards are in place.

Mr. Speaker, any changes will need to ensure there is a full understanding of potential impacts to our provincial aquaculture industry. I was pleased to outline the importance of aquaculture to our province and the need to ensure there is a collaborative approach with the federal

government as we grow our aquaculture industry.

In *The Way Forward*, our vision is to double our salmon aquaculture production and we must work collaboratively with our federal partners to ensure we achieve this goal by monitoring and evaluating aquaculture sites throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that I was given the opportunity to provide the House of Commons Standing Committee with Newfoundland and Labrador's thoughts on how the federal government should move forward with changes to the *Fisheries Act*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We agree with the importance of protecting habitat and ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place.

As the minister pointed out, the aquaculture industry plays a significant role in this province's economy and working with our federal counterparts will certainly help ensure the future growth and success.

The only thing I want to add is to encourage my colleague to raise the issue of joint fisheries management at any chance he gets to the federal minister and representatives of DFO. I'm looking forward to continued success in this industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It is interesting to hear the minister speak about his concerns on how

federal regulations regarding fish habitat may impact the aquaculture industry. I note he has not been as concerned about aquaculture's impact on our fish habitat. We know his government did not do a proper environmental impact statement on the proposed Grieg aquaculture project in Placentia Bay. I urge the minister to monitor closely the impact of this project on the bay's already strained ecosystem.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to commend WorkplaceNL on its recent announcement of changes that show the strength of our workplace health, safety and compensation system.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of workplace injuries is at an all-time low in our province. The number of new reported lost-time injuries over the past year was 1.5 per 100 workers.

When WorkplaceNL receives fewer claims from injured workers the result is typically lower costs for employers, and more people going home safely at the end of their work day.

As well, it pleases me to report that WorkplaceNL's Injury Fund is fully funded, and we will strive to ensure that remains so for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, these lower injury rates and the fully funded position have enabled WorkplaceNL to reduce the average assessment rate for employers by 14 cents, or 6 per cent, to \$2.06 per \$100 of assessable pay. As well, the maximum compensable and assessable earnings for injured workers will increase to \$63,420, remaining the highest in Atlantic Canada. Both of these changes are effective January 1, 2017.

Education has been a key component in reducing workplace injuries, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to support safety training and other education initiatives.

I would like to commend the collaborative efforts of workers, employers, employer groups, labour groups, safety associations,

WorkplaceNL and government which combine to make workplaces in our province safer for everyone.

Working together, we are reducing costs to the employer-funded workers' compensation system, while ensuring injured workers continue to receive benefits to which they are entitled.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, we are helping more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians live safe and have healthy lives.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It's always good to hear that WorkplaceNL is receiving fewer claims, the workplace injuries are being reduced, and they are at an all-time low. It's also good to hear that there will be a reduction to the employers of this province as a result of fewer injuries. It's an important time for employers in this province because of the difficult times that they find.

Our government was focused on education and awareness, and we need to continue this to reduce injuries in the future. And good work by the WorkplaceNL.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This report is all well and good, but my constituency office continues to be inundated with calls from frustrated injured workers needing help trying to navigate and negotiate their claims through the WorkplaceNL

system. We have also received reports from WorkplaceNL employees regarding the stress and toxicity that exists inside WorkplaceNL. They are frustrated in their attempts to help claimants.

So this begs to question, Mr. Speaker: If money is being saved for employers, who is paying for those savings?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the Estimates meetings the Minister of Natural Resources unequivocally committed to not cut core funding to youth organizations. Now we find out that youth organizations have had their annual core funding slashed by 50 per cent or more.

I ask the minister: Why did you give false assurances to these vital, important community organizations?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement it was the grants to youth organizations that are dealt with. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that the core funding for groups and associations in our province, that was not part of the grants to youth organizations, and I think the Member opposite would know that.

Based on where we are this year, there were \$1.5 million worth of applications that came in from 66 applicants within the province this year –

very similar to where we were last year, except that the number was much higher.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that this year we were able to fund new organizations like the YMCA, like the Kids Help Phone, like the Association for New Canadians. So with 66 applications, \$1.5 million in requests, we were able to satisfy a number of the concerns on what was an open call for applications this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I should note to the Premier, as he knows my background, I'm very aware of exactly the difference between core funding and project funding. And a Boys and Girls Club getting funding for the last 35 years is considered core funding, and so are many other organizations here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: I ask the Premier: Do you have any idea what the impact to these organizations will be? How many children and youth will be negatively impacted?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, these were project-based applications that would come in, as it was mentioned earlier. As a matter of fact, last year we announced the core funding for groups around our province – over \$70 million that was announced in advance, so we could actually let organizations prepare for where they would be in the future.

One of the things that we've often talked about and will do as part of *The Way Forward* vision is to make sure we put in multi-year funding core funding for those associations. We recognize that there has been a lot of time that's been wasted by executive directors and staff at those organizations who would do a great job on behalf of this province, but what they want to be able to do is spend their time doing the work in their communities. That is the reason why we

announced the core funding earlier last year, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Multi-year funding is not new for youth organizations; it's been going on for years and years in the past.

Have all youth organizations been advised about their funding cuts?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, the letters have gone out to the successful applicants, and those that have not been successful. These have been done. As I said this year, there have been 36 of 66 applicants that have been successful. Very similar to where we were last year: 69 applicants last year; 36 of those were successful. So there were quite a few unsuccessful applicants this year.

But we're very pleased this year to be able to support the Association for New Canadians, as I mentioned earlier, Kids Help Phone, which we were not supported last year by the previous administration.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the \$1.5 million worth of requests, of course you would know that the funding levels would necessarily be changed. This is providing a valuable contribution for project-specific. Mr. Speaker, it really speaks to the point where, as a government, we were headed in the direction of having a single point of entry for applications – for funding applications within the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: So there were announcements in the budget back in April that there was funding for youth organizations. Seven months later, you

start notifying some organizations that have had it for salaries, have had it for specialized programs and services, who have had it to investments in their communities – now you're asking those same organizations that you've got to take a 55 or 60 per cent cut.

Can you tell me, Premier, when did these letters go out? Because I've been notified today that some organizations don't know, I had to tell them what their cuts were as of today.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Those letters went out some time ago. I'm curious to know that if the minister – you must have been aware that was happening because you must have received a letter from somebody.

Mr. Speaker, these are project based, so these are specific from the Office of Public Engagement. These applications are specific to various groups. As an example, the Boys and Girls Clubs across Newfoundland and Labrador received over 20 per cent of the allocation of funding this year, the YMCA as an example, as I just mentioned the kids' helpline.

Mr. Speaker, there are over 30 different groups across this province right now that have received funding that we would encourage skills, knowledge and professional development within our communities, within our province. They are doing great jobs. Those organizations are doing great jobs, but they are project-based funding, not core funding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: The Premier may be right, that Boys and Girls Clubs did receive 20 per cent of the core funding but if you look at their budget lines, they also took a 50 per cent cut in the funding they were reliant on as their core funding for, in some instances, the last 35 years.

The impact on the community's children, youth and families will be significant. Groups such as Scouts, Guides, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys

and Girls Clubs who deliver invaluable service and programs to youth will be devastated.

How can this minister and her government commit to funding one day, then six months later axe the funding?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What was committed to early last year was core funding. This is project-based funding I say again, Mr. Speaker. We've already said that as part of going forward, *The Way Forward* document that we put out.

What is important is basically to redirect through a single point of entry so people and organizations around our province – it will be more efficient, Mr. Speaker. It will be able to make decisions on a timelier basis. So a single point of entry for applicants to access funding initiatives that we will put in the budget 2017-2018. We will do it early.

The previous minister might have suggested that they did it over multi year, but that's not what organizations were telling us. They were telling us they were spending a large amount of their time going out seeking financial resources from other sources because they asked for and wanted multi-year funding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I must clarify for the Premier, I was never minister. What I was, was a senior bureaucrat who was responsible for the program. So I'm very aware of exactly what our programs and services were and how we moved them forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: What I will ask, too: What are your organizations telling you now that you've cut? What have you heard back from the organizations? There can't be anybody here now telling you that they're happy with the cuts that they've been taking.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We receive lots of positive mentions about the work that has been done by this department. I would just remind the former minister and a former bureaucrat, that they also cut many. As a matter of fact, over 33 organizations were cut last year under their administration. So he's using his memory to be very selective I say, Mr. Speaker. This is not core funding; this is grants to youth organizations. They do great work in our province, Mr. Speaker, working with our youth.

Mr. Speaker, this is very similar; the organizations that have been supported this year are very similar to what has been supported last year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I ask the Premier to check his math because I have the numbers there. Some organizations are cut by 60 per cent of their core funding.

These organizations encourage opportunities around training, mentorship and professional development from promoting youth leadership to helping at-risk youth and low-income families.

Now that you have slashed these organizations, where will these children, youth and families turn for these vital, important services?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, these were specific project funding, Mr. Speaker. There's still support for core funding in other initiatives for those organizations that qualify for that.

We will be putting in place multi-year funding I say, Mr. Speaker. The former minister seems to

forget that last year they cut around 33 organizations to zero last year. So this is not an area that many organizations have not had to deal with in their past. I agree, Mr. Speaker, these youth organizations do a great job in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing right now, even though it is a different funding level, we're seeing many community organizations and people like the kid's helpline, which they did not support last year, is receiving support from this administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, we know that 30 per cent of the budget that was allocated from the previous administration to this administration has been cut. We know there's less money for vital youth organizations here. The Premier can spin it whatever way he wants. The former minister or the present minister who talked about it in Estimates about core funding, they were obviously playing on words about what was core funding.

The questions asked on this side in Estimates were about: Will youth organizations be cut? Unequivocally, it was said, no, it would not be cut as part of the process.

Core funding, explain which organizations. We know CYNs are core funding and the lunch program. What about the other 100 youth organizations that have been getting core funding to sustain their operations, to start up their operations, to then leverage other dollars to ensure programs and services are offered?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the meeting that the former minister is talking about was May 10, 2016, when the former deputy premier had asked a question to the minister who was responsible for the Office of Public Engagement at that time. She was very

clear in saying the grants she was being questioned about from the former deputy premier were not core funding. It was the Minister of Finance that was responsible for that.

Hansard clearly says what happened on that day. It was May 10, 2016, to clarify; the former person responsible for this department made it very clear that this was not core funding. These were project related.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I can recall the minister saying youth organizations would not be cut.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Can the minister confirm that the funding for the only youth organization on Bell Island, the Boys and Girls Club, has taken a 60 per cent cut to core funding?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I will just read to clarify what is there. The former minister can play on words all he wants. She went on to say, “I have assured the Member opposite we will do our best to make sure that funding will be carried on”

Mr. Speaker, \$1.5 million worth of funding applications came in. Core funding went through the Department of Finance. Over \$70 million went into core funding for many great organizations, doing great work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across our province.

We believe in those organizations as well, but the Member opposite, I will say, is really playing on words right now. They themselves did not fund many, many organizations last year, and he knows that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind all hon. Members that the only person I wish to hear from is the person that I’ve identified to have the floor.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I might note to the Premier too that we funded many more youth organizations in the days when we were in administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: That’s documented; \$1.5 million, to me, is not a big investment in the young people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Economists have always agreed that youth organizations alone provide services and also leverage an average of \$4 for every dollar invested. So you’re not saving money. You’re actually losing money in our economy.

I ask the Premier: How do these cuts serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, last year it wasn’t \$1.5 million in applications to the prior administration, but there were 69 and 36 were approved, Mr. Speaker. So for him to simply say they helped more is simply not true.

I like his take, though – and I have to go here for a few minutes – on what were the economic benefits and how you plan for the future, in particular for our youth. That Member sat at a Cabinet table, when he really wasn’t too concerned about the future of this province or the future of our youth because what he wanted to do was smother them in debt. That’s what he wanted to do, Mr. Speaker. He thought the future of our province was best left with our youth taking on extra debt for the services that we provide today.

So, Mr. Speaker, when this minister talks about the future and the economy of our province, we are not going to base our decisions how you did at your Cabinet table. Clearly, we know where that got us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Again, I remind all hon. Members that it is important the Speaker hear all dialogue. I ask that only the Member identified to speak be vocal in this Chamber.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the Premier will continue to say it is project based, it is project based, it is project based. We know that is simply factually incorrect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: In Estimates on April 19, and in Question Period on May 10, as the Premier points out, we were assured by the minister formally responsible for the Office of Public Engagement that core funding would remain, plain and simple. And, as we suspected, that was false.

Minister, either you were unaware of your former department's intentions, or even worse, you were disingenuous. Which is it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, in response to the question – I have it right here – the minister who was responsible at the time, she said this very clearly that there is project funding under some of the aspects of OPE, which is the funding that we are talking about today, the grants to youth organizations.

So if anyone is disingenuous in this House today, it is the Member who was responsible for this department. He knows quite clearly – he knows the difference here. He knows that this is project funding that we are talking about, Mr.

Speaker. Core funding comes out of the Department of Finance.

Now, that's a department that he has not been in yet, from I gather, Mr. Speaker. Maybe in the future he will be, but the minister who was responsible for this, he knows very well that this is project related, and he also knows very well that there were about 33 organizations that he did not fund himself last year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: The Premier is correct that we couldn't fund every single request that we received, but we did not cut core funding to youth organizations in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: So just because these groups fill out a form annually doesn't mean that they don't rely on this funding each and every year to sustain their programs.

I ask the Premier: If an organization depends on the same amount of money each and every year in order to continue its operations, how can you call that anything other than core funding?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the applicants, when they made out their applications, when they filed their applications, it was for project-related funding, Mr. Speaker. We have core funding that comes from various departments. The Minister of Finance announced that early last year so we would actually provide the certainty that was required.

Mr. Speaker, the processes that were determined to actually fund organizations last year, under the former minister, were quite different I would say. It's worth, I think, many people looking at this and how some of those organizations they decided to fund.

Mr. Speaker, given where we were with \$1.5 million in requests, we were able to fund quite a number of youth organizations who do great work in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we've heard from many organizations. We've heard from one in particular that had their annual core funding cut in half.

Can the Premier confirm that all annual funding to youth organizations was cut by a similar amount? Or, as it sounds, did this government shamefully cherry-pick winners and losers when slashing funding six months into the fiscal year?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, when you look at cherry-picking, Mr. Speaker, history tells a wonderful story. I'm pleased today to be able to stand here and – I'm not so sure of the mechanism, as I just alluded to a few minutes ago, or the processes of the former minister who was responsible for this. From what I gather, looking at the process that he had used, there were certainly some very political decisions that were used, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask the former minister when he stands up on his next question, if he will explain why decisions that he made – that we could have even had certain applicants that might have even received a little extra money than their application actually asked for. Would he like to explain that before he asks his next question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: It's a clever technique, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to answer the Premier's questions, but in Question Period we'll ask the

questions and hopefully, eventually, he's going to answer (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Can the Premier, who's now responsible for what's left of the Office of Public Engagement, confirm that funding to the Boys and Girls Club in St. John's has been cut by over 50 per cent, from \$72,000 annually to \$34,000 this year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We went through the applications. There was a process that was determined and we reviewed the applications. As I said, Mr. Speaker, some 66 applications; not every single organization could receive the full funding – \$1.5 million in applications, as I said. So there was, no doubt, organizations – from a project-funding mechanism, some of those were cut. No organization received 100 per cent of their request.

Mr. Speaker, we tried to do the best job that we could, supporting youth in our province, given the applications and the volume of applications that had come in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I thank the Premier for confirming that in fact everybody, all youth organizations under this program were cut this year to some extent.

Can the Premier confirm that funding to the Pool's Cove community youth centre, basically the only youth program in the community, has been eliminated?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the former minister would know that under his own program last year a number of organizations did not get any money either, Mr.

Speaker. So these are decisions that you have to make. We find a balance in where we are in trying to satisfy as many youth organizations based on the project that they were requesting funding for.

There was \$1.5 million and 66 applications. Nearly 33 applications for the prior administration, they were denied last year too, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I have no problem taking responsibility for any decisions I've been involved in in the past, but I hope at some point this Premier will start taking responsibility for the decisions he's making and the ones he's made over the past year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Those cuts in Pool's Cove mean there will be very limited or perhaps no programming for youth and even some seniors programming this winter.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier confirm that funding to the Boys and Girls Club in Norris Arm has been cut by 55 per cent, from \$15,500 to only \$7,500?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we've already said there are a number of different organizations that did not receive full funding. As a matter of fact, no organization received full funding. I think the last time I saw that was a decision that was made by the former minister where he actually increased the funding of certain organizations even above and beyond where the application would have been, Mr. Speaker.

I have no problem at all taking responsibility for the actions that we make and the decisions that we make; but, Mr. Speaker, what is very clear is the former administration will not take any

responsibility of why we are in this situation that we're into.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to hear the former deputy premier at some point get up and explain to people why they decided deliberately not to let people know the financial situation of this province, why it is they continued to hide it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I'd refer the Premier to *Budget 2015*.

I ask the Premier – if you can't listen, you can't lead; I think someone once said that – why did you not consult with these youth organizations prior to making these drastic cuts?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'm glad to talk about *Budget 2015*, Mr. Speaker, as the former minister just asked me to. That was the budget I believe that they had predicted to be \$1.1 billion; that was *Budget 2015*. Since he brought it up and he now wants to take responsibility for it – by the way, that budget in 2015 wasn't \$1.1 billion; it was actually \$2.2 billion.

Then he's questioning today about the youth of our province, yet he's willing to pass that debt on to grandchildren, to his own children, Mr. Speaker, and he wants to talk about *Budget 2015*. Well, I would encourage him to take responsibility for that finally once and for all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Let me provide some recent history for the Premier. In March, the Finance Minister promised no cuts to core funding for non-profits. In April and May, the Natural Resources Minister who was then responsible for the Office of Public Engagement gave

assurance to youth organizations that their core funding was safe.

Six months pass, without a sound, and now these organizations find out that they were lied to by government. How can the Liberal government possibly justify their decisions to cut funding?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, that is very strong language from a former deputy premier. When you're talking about that kind of language and you realize that they deliberately held back information about the financial situation of this province, deliberately held it back, when they had the information well in advance, had information about the financial affairs of this province, had information about where Muskrat Falls was.

He sat at that Cabinet table when those decisions were made prior to the election last year and he's accusing us today, Mr. Speaker; that is not accepting responsibility. It is disingenuous I say, Mr. Speaker, and you should be ashamed of yourself today I say to the former minister for actually even raising this today, based on the decisions that you made for the future of our youth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We know this government is considering public-private partnerships for hospital construction. I ask the Premier: Is he also considering evidence from Auditors General in five provinces about high costs and poor management of P3 highways, hospitals and other public works?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the Member opposite for the question. We, as a government, are looking at all

opportunities. As we clearly stated last year, we're looking at a value for money. We know the previous administration had a plan in place for P3s that was not acceptable for us, as a government, because we wanted to explore all options that are out there.

There are different models on the continuum of P3s that we are looking at, Mr. Speaker. What we're doing is we're looking at doing a value for money. When we are in a position to determine the best return, that's a decision this government will make and it will be made in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last week, a P3 proponent recommended that this province partner with Infrastructure Ontario or Partnerships BC to build P3s because they know the best approaches.

I ask the Premier: Has he read the Auditor General of Ontario's report on Infrastructure Ontario's poor track record of building infrastructure, which cost taxpayers \$8 billion more than if projects had been publicly financed and managed? How about that on the backs of the people?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, thank you and I thank the Member for the question.

Again, I will tell you that this side of the House is doing our due diligence. We are going to be making decisions that are in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I mentioned, on the continuum of P3s, there are different models. The models that are put in place, there have been issues with other P3s. There are also some good stories from P3s. There are also P3s that are effective.

We, as a government, are going to do our due diligence. We have engaged expertise in the area of looking at what is going to be the best value for money for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is based upon that, Mr. Speaker, that this government will make a decision in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Spending more money to pay private enterprise is not in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: Has he seen the BC Auditor General's report which found a serious conflict of interest in Partnerships BC, or is he only listening to what P3 advocates say about these entities?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. I just wanted to make it very, very clear to this hon. House. This government is serious about where we are. We are serious about where we're going and what we're going to be doing, Mr. Speaker.

In the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are going to make our decisions based on evidence. We're not going to make our decisions based on just whatever whim is out there. We are going to be basing it on evidence, and we have said this over and over again. Our decisions are going to be evidence-based decisions in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. And whatever that model is going to be, Mr. Speaker, that is the model we're going to be putting forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

And we do hope they do base it on evidence, and there's lots of evidence out there that there are huge problems with the P3 model felt all the way from BC to Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, the government has just tabled procurement legislation in the House of Assembly to establish a new procurement act.

Given that we now know P3s in other jurisdictions cost taxpayers more money, I ask the Premier: What powers will the procurement act and the *Auditor General Act* have to ensure public interest is being well served if this government decides to ignore the warnings and move ahead with P3s?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think if the Member opposite – I'm sure she was here last night. We went through second reading, and I think everyone agrees that we have a procurement in place. I think they all agree with that. I think we have third reading and, obviously, they're going to vote in favour of that as well.

Part of the procurement act that we had is in the best interest, of course, of doing business in this province. We have outlined – and the minister has done an excellent job in answering the questions that have been posed from the opposite side, because we are putting ourselves in a position to make the best decisions. Again, the procurement act is going to enable us to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, all of this becomes a part of a bigger plan in which we are going to make the right decisions for the right of the people in this province going forward and not have to deal with some of the mistakes that we are trying to correct.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order.

During Question Period, the Opposition Deputy House Leader made comments that government had lied in reference to statements made by the Premier. I think the Member opposite knows that's clearly unparliamentary. I would ask that he retract his statement and apologize.

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

MR. KENT: I withdraw the remark, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee of the 47th General Assembly was precluded by the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – dissolution of the November 5, 2015, from reporting on the hearings held during the fourth session of the last General Assembly.

On behalf of the Public Accounts Committee of the 48th General Assembly, I respectfully request the evidence adduced during the hearings conducted by the Public Accounts Committee during the fourth session of the last General Assembly and related material be referred to the current Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Further presenting reports by standing and select committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act No. 2. (Bill 53)

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 5. And further, pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House not adjourn at 10 p.m. on December 5, 2016.

Further, pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6. And further, pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House not adjourn at 10 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS many students within our province depend on school busing for transportation to and from school each day; and

WHEREAS there have been a number of buses removed from service over the past few weeks for safety reasons, calling into question the current inspection enforcement protocol for school buses in the province; and

WHEREAS there have been concerns raised by members of the busing industry regarding government's tendering practices as it relates to the provision of school bus service in the province; and

WHEREAS there are many parents throughout our province who have raised both scheduling as well as safety concerns regarding the English School District's 1.6 kilometre policy, the courtesy seating policy, the new double bus run schedule, as well as overcrowding on school buses;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to strike an all-party committee on school busing to consult with stakeholders and make recommendations to government for the improvement to the school busing system in our province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand again on this petition. This obviously is a significant concern for families in this province who have children attending school. As I've acknowledged in the past when I've raised this, I'm very glad to see that apparently there will be some new legislation coming forward as it relates to school bus inspections and enforcement. I certainly look forward to that. I think that's definitely a step in the right direction.

When it relates to the 1.6 kilometre rule and double busing, that still remains an issue for families and for children. From a safety point of view, children having to walk to school, certainly this time of the year with walking in the dark, when the snow comes now they'll be walking in winter conditions.

A lot of communities don't have sidewalks or proper crosswalks and so on. Even communities that do have sidewalks and crosswalks like my

community, there are still issues in the winter when the sidewalks are not cleared and there's heavy traffic.

It continues to be an issue. I'll continue to present it on behalf of the people who have these concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has once again cut the libraries budget, threatening the closure of 54 libraries; and

WHEREAS libraries are often the backbone of their communities, especially for those with little access to government services where they offer learning opportunities and computer access; and

WHEREAS libraries and librarians are critical in efforts to improve the province's literacy levels which are among the lowest in Canada; and

WHEREAS already strapped municipalities are not in a position to take over the operation and cost of libraries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to keep these libraries open and work on a long-term plan to strengthen the library system.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it's heartbreaking to stand up in this House again today and present these petitions on the potential closure of libraries. I know that it has been postponed at this point while there's consultation happening.

But on the day when we hear about the cuts to many youth organizations, core funding cuts to

many youth organizations, what will happen in Pool's Cove? What will happen in some of the other communities where not only are their libraries taken away but funding for their young people?

Many of their young people use these libraries. Many of the libraries are actually the core and the heart of their community. What is this government doing? It's absolutely tearing the heart out of communities. They're taking them apart limb by limb.

Mr. Speaker, this particular group of signed petitions I have are a little bit different. They're from Eastport, but these are people from all over the province, all over the country who went to Eastport for the writers' festival. They were all incredibly surprised, those who came from outside of our province, incredibly surprised that in this day and age government would close libraries, particularly when our literacy rates are the lowest in the country.

People were shocked to hear of the planned closure of 54 rural libraries. They regard a public library as a cornerstone of any community and its closure as an impoverishment of the people who live there. This is what we're hearing about here today, Mr. Speaker, with the cutting of youth organizations and the potential closure of libraries, they're impoverishing the very communities on which the economy of this province was built, on the backs of the people in these rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development agree with the patrons of these literary festivals and tell the public we're sorry, we messed up –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – we've heard the public response, loud and clear, and that they will reinstate the funding? It's the right thing to do. It's the morally right thing to do and the economic thing to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* dramatically cut home care hours to many of the province's most vulnerable people;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately reinstate much-needed supports to those who need it and develop a plan to further address the growing needs of people requiring home care support.

Mr. Speaker, as is often talked about in this hon. House, there's a real crisis, I would say, in health care when it comes to seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador today and certainly a significant shortage of beds available for them in long-term care.

One of the solutions to addressing that issue is providing supports for them to be able to live in their homes that they've lived in all their lives, close to their family and friends, in the last years of their lives which are supposed to be the golden years. Certainly there's nothing more important, especially to seniors, than having their loved ones who are near and dear to them close at hand.

To see the measures enacted in *Budget 2016* and the detrimental effect they are having on seniors is absolutely devastating. I have to say, I have been in politics now for nine years and this summer marked the highest incidents of calls I have received from people in tears because of the measures imposed by Members opposite in *Budget 2016* that are devastating seniors, youth, persons with disabilities, all across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some people are being told, well, as the result of reassessment, now you're losing an hour. The budget clearly states that each and every single

person who is receiving home care, whereas before they could get up to three hours for personal care and cleaning, now they can only get two. The cap is at two. So across the board, everybody has lost an hour.

In addition to that, the amount they have to contribute towards their home care has increased from 15 per cent to 18 per cent. At the same time, they've added a bureaucratic position at a cost of about half a million dollars a year, at least, pension benefits and everything else that comes with it. They're taking out of the pockets of our seniors who have grown this province the very core services that they need to enjoy a decent quality of life. It's absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly hope the government revisits their decisions and comes to the conclusion that \$500,000 would be much more wisely spent by helping keep our seniors in their homes with their loved ones.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: 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 provincial wait-lists for long-term care continue to grow; and

WHEREAS the hospital beds are increasingly being occupied by individuals who are in need of long-term care; and

WHEREAS this government cancelled the previous administration's plan to increase capacity by 360 beds province-wide;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately develop a plan to address the

shortage of long-term care beds in order to ensure people receive appropriate care and are treated with dignity.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that has been talked about a lot. It's not a new issue to this House and to the public. The previous administration had made a commitment to start construction of 360 long-term care beds because as every person who is anyway familiar with this topic, we're in dire need of more long-term care beds.

I'm sure every MHA can attest in this House that, on a district level, they're dealing with this on a daily basis. I know I am, personally, in my district. I have a lot of people who are trying to get into homes; beds are not available. You have dementia patients who are in improper locations. The families are putting them in a bed because they can't take them home, but they have no long-term care facility for them. So they're placing them in places where it puts a lot of stress on the families. No doubt, the residents, we are trying to find a place to live. As we all progress, as the need comes up for our loved ones – and I suppose eventually for all of us one of these days – you want to have some dignity about you.

With the previous administration, the plan was to have these 360 long-term care beds. We'd be well towards, we'd be pretty close – you'd be well in the process of having those ready. Instead, the current administration decided to cancel it because they have a better plan. We've yet to see that better plan.

Some of the stuff you hear, I mean it's laughable. You have the Minister of Transportation and Works getting up and talking about his asset optimization and the best evidence-based decision making. We know I.J. Sampson was a great example of asset optimization and evidence-based decision making. A lot more people would have lined up to purchase it at that price, Mr. Speaker. You cancelled it. Then they proudly said why they cancelled the P3 model because they want to do it on evidence based.

We're into a year and we've still seen nothing and the list continues to grow, Mr. Speaker. The wait-lists are growing. The frustration within those families, in most cases, is quite a sad situation.

Maybe some of the people in making these decisions need to talk to the families and get a first-hand account because, I'll tell you, some of the stuff is pretty heart wrenching. When your loved one is the one that's being affected, there's no solution being offered by this government to help these people. I think it's time for them to give this some serious consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day –

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible) by all means.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Government House Leader as well for his co-operation as always – well, most of the time; all the time in the last 24 hours.

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 decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union presents new trade opportunities; and

WHEREAS the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has a historic trade relationship with the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS the two regions may mutually benefit from trade opportunities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to develop an economic strategy which capitalizes

on trade opportunities between the United Kingdom and Newfoundland and Labrador.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked a couple of times in the past. The minister and I have had an exchange about the opportunity that Brexit presents for Newfoundland and Labrador. The minister has acknowledged that there is ongoing work within Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development in terms of trade relations, but I guess what this petition is calling for is something more than that. There's a unique opportunity that is now before us. So carrying on with existing initiatives, programs and efforts is good stuff, but we believe that a real, concerted effort needs to be made to build even stronger ties with the UK.

The British people voted in a referendum on June 23 to leave the EU, and the new prime minister has made clear that the will of the British people will be brought into effect and that by March of 2017 the UK will formally have started the process of leaving. So that means as the UK leaves the EU over the next few years, powers that have been taken to Brussels will be back in the UK government in Westminster and, most importantly, for Newfoundland and Labrador is the power for the UK to make its own international trade deals.

So why does all this matter? Well if you look at our historic trade relationships, the United Kingdom is the second largest buyer of goods from Newfoundland and Labrador on the international market. They imported \$605 million of products from our province last year. We have historic ties, we have a direct transportation link to London and we can work with the UK to use its newly found powers to strike a deal that delivers more trade, more jobs and more prosperity to the people of this province.

So we see real opportunity here. We would be happy to support government's efforts in pursuing this because the time is now and I think it could lead to new trade opportunities that would deliver security, stability and opportunity for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I call, seconded by the Member for Lab West, that Bill 46, An Act Respecting Procurement By Public Bodies now be read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 46 be now read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

Bill 46, the Act Respecting Procurement by Public Bodies, I did want to use this opportunity to make a couple of the points that I did make throughout second reading and during Committee. I want it very, very clear that we do want a procurement act and we do need a procurement act, but the act that's been put before us, this act which the government is calling a framework act, is just that. It's a frame, not just framework and when we looked for details in some really important areas, we could not find the details.

As the minister kept pointing out in responses to various questions and points that were raised – he didn't use this language, but I will. What he really kept pointing out is the devil is going to be in the details and we're not going to see those in this House of Assembly.

Some of the details, in my book, are not details that are put in regulations. The details we're concerned about are details that have to do with policy. I pointed out on a number of occasions the areas in which it was policy that was lacking in the bill. So that we have a Treasury Board being given powers, we have the chief procurement officer being given powers and we have the LG in Council being given powers too, which they should have, but all in areas where policy is involved, without any direction in the bill about what that policy should look like.

One of the areas, for example it's fine to say that the bill values diversity in procurement – but what does that mean? What it means is not something that comes out in a regulation. What it means is an explanation that should be in the bill when we're talking about reports being made by Nalcor to the government and then on to the chief procurement officer, or reports being made by the Research and Development Council and then on to the chief procurement officer without any direction of what those reports should be covering.

The whole bill is like that. We kept pointing out throughout the discussions that there are details that are missing that are more than things that would be in regulations. My concern is the regulations will be exactly what regulations are, which is a sort of a how-to manual, and will not have directions with regard to the value statements that have to be made, with regard to the policies that have to be put in place.

So what we're being asked to do is to vote on a bill that is fairly empty, hoping that the regulations, into which we have no say, will take care of the concerns that we have raised.

So the one thing I want to put on the record is that when we vote against this bill, we are not voting against having good procurement policy in this province. We're voting against a bill that hasn't presented us with enough policy to vote on. So I want that made clear, because I don't want the minister standing and saying we voted against procurement. We are not voting against that. But this bill is far below what we would have expected.

When we quiz the government on the criteria for evaluation, criteria for how do you judge

whether or not there is diversity, that's not a regulation. What are the values behind this? And all we could get is it's the best bang for our buck, really. Get the best value for our money – yes, we want the best value for our money, but how do we get there, while also recognizing values that are really important? How do we get there by recognizing the need for diversity?

Not just the need for diversity, in terms of the companies themselves – is the company a company owned by Aboriginal people, or is the company owned by women? That's only one aspect. Is this company a company that in itself values diversity that it shows in its policies and the way it acts that it values diversity? It's much broader than the minister seemed to understand when you talk about diversity in procurement. You look at the companies and you evaluate where they are when it comes to equality, where they are when it comes to diversity, where there are when it comes to sustainable procurement practices. This is what you look at; you look at how to evaluate the companies.

This was one of the things that was exciting, that's it not just the lowest bidder. But there's not enough in this to tell us how the companies are going to be evaluated with regard to these other areas. How they're going to be evaluated to determine that not only is it best value for our money, in terms of the quality of the work being done, but is it best value for our money in terms of the labour practices of the company? Is it the best value for our money in terms of the recognition by this company of the need for diversity? Does this company show that it understands what sustainable development is? There is nothing in the bill around how that evaluation is going to be done. I would put out that's more than a regulation, that is policy, and there are no directions around the policy.

Mr. Speaker, we were here until 1:30 this morning on this. We debated yesterday on this as well. Nothing I'm saying is new, but I just wanted to make clear and put it on the record when we vote against this bill today, we are not voting against procurement. It's our statement of how disappointed we are that the government did not go further in giving us a true *Public Procurement Act* which really shows what the values are, that really shows the direction in which government wants to go, beyond just

saying we want to get the best value for our money.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I just want to rise and make a few comments on the bill. I also want to acknowledge my Member for Mount Pearl North. I think he did a fantastic job going through each section. I'll also commend the minister for giving the best answers that he could give with the questions.

It was a great debate here last night. I think everybody that was involved in it took a lot out of the debate. It's the way the House of Assembly should work. I commend the two of them actually.

I guess I'll say exactly what the previous speaker just spoke about. It's a lot of the unknowns that are in this bill that has us worried. I'm sure it has a lot of people worried about what's going to come.

We understand that regulations do come in afterwards and stuff like that. But when you're talking about 20 regulations to this bill, where 17 of them are going to be done in Cabinet and three are going to be done to the minister, it's almost like trust me; we'll do a good job. I think the people and employers, municipalities, everyone in the province would like to know the details.

In a lot of cases, once something comes in as a regulation, whatever it is – and I know the minister said last night that we debate a lot of the regulations here in the House and we'll have to ask questions, but once regulation comes in from Cabinet or from the minister, it's a job to change them.

I know government has the right to bring in those regulations and it's part of Cabinet's job to do so. But with a bill like this, that we talked about in the House and we talked about \$4 billion and we talked about what effect it has on municipalities, what effect it has on Nalcor,

what effect it has on every industry in the province really, because when you're talking \$4 billion, you're talking about investments in snow clearing, you're talking about investments in garbage collection when it comes to municipalities. You're talking about investments in printers and stuff like this.

We all realize that this bill really did need to come in. We agreed. We agreed that procurement needs to be done, but there are a lot of unknowns and there's a lot asked to trust me. That's a problem we have. We really do have a problem with that.

There are parts of this bill that I really do like. I really like the part with best value, but when it comes to best value – and being a municipal leader myself in the past, this is going to be great for municipalities because you're going to have the opportunity to say to someone who's supplying a service to your town that your standards are not up. If you want to bid on this contract, your truck needs to be operational. We want to make sure your truck, the equipment that you are putting on the road is not going to breakdown and we're not going to have problems in the middle of a snowstorm, or when it comes to garbage collection that there's not going to be delays and garbage is not going to be left.

That's great, municipalities really do want that. We want to understand when the regulations come in on something like best value, how's it going to be determined? Is there an opportunity for somebody to take advantage of a council or of an organization that comes in and says, b'y, I offered my best value. What are the criteria? That's what needs to be determined here in this bill.

Procurement, we agree with it. It has to be brought in, but we need to understand what's going to happen down the road is the unknowns. What's going to happen when Cabinet and the minister himself puts these regulations in? What opportunities are going to be given to people to say, b'y that's not how I thought it was going to work? Give an opportunity for us here as legislators to give our opinions on it.

I know it's difficult and I know it's important. It's a very important bill to the whole province.

Again, \$4 billion is a lot of money, but the devil is really in the details in this bill. While we agree with most of it, there are still so many unknowns that people and municipalities need to know.

Again, it comes to the point of trust. I know people trust in government and trust in parties to do things, and then the direct opposite will happen. We've seen that so many times. We've seen that so many times in the previous budget, promises that were made were never, ever kept, and the same thing with this bill.

I don't think there are many people who would disagree that this procurement shouldn't come in, I agree, but they still want to know what the details are and what's going to be in the legislation down the road. That's part of the problem we have with this bill.

That's just a few words I had to say about the bill. I don't know if anyone else is going to get up and talk about it, but it's all about trust and it's all about a lot of unknowns. It's about what's going to happen down the road, and I hope we can trust government to do the right thing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm very happy to once again stand and speak to this bill. This is a major bill that has major consequences. I thank the government and I thank the minister for bringing this bill to the House. This bill provides an opportunity to really be courageous, to really be forward thinking, to really be progressive in how we do our procurement. It's unfortunate, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the minister and the government haven't chosen to take full advantage of this opportunity.

We see a framework that is somewhat vague. There are great opportunities and great possibilities with this bill. Among them – well, last night I spoke at length about the issue of diversity and what does that mean. We have this vague statement of the value of diversity, but

there are other issues as well that this bill could be covering.

I know a lot will be covered in regulations, but also there needs to be more substantive policy guidelines, really substantive policy guidelines that reflect our values as a province. That's not just regulations. They're fundamental values that we hold dear as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that will guide how we go about doing our business. Among them are the issues of diversity, but also, how is this going to guide the whole issue of P3s?

If this government decides to go in the direction of P3s for a number of our public services, currently our Auditor General does not have the authority to go into any private facility. His act does not allow him to do that. So, for instance, if we see a private hospital –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: If we see a hospital built by a P3 model, by a private, for-profit company that also manages it, our Auditor General does not have the right to go in there and do his work, the work that we ask him to do on behalf of the people of the province. So we need to look at that, how that will intercept with the procurement legislation.

Again, it is an incredible opportunity to really embed our values, as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, in how we will go about spending our money, how we will go about doing our business. This is about doing our business on behalf of the people of the province.

Another thing that we haven't really seen is the issue of social enterprises. How will we look at that? Will there be a different scoring mechanism, in terms of appraising proposals, if something is a social enterprise where the values for social enterprise are about training, making sure that the people of the province get training, making sure that there is diversity, making sure that there are sustainable ways of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, in Scotland, for instance, in their procurement legislation – which is really progressive, perhaps among the most progressive in the country – they have a community benefit clause. Now we haven't seen that in our proposed legislation, but what –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

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

As I was saying, in Scotland that has very progressive procurement legislation, in their legislation they have a clause that's called a community benefit clause. Wouldn't it be great if we could include a community benefit clause?

This is what the community benefit clause does. It guarantees targeted recruitment, it guarantees training, it guarantees small businesses and local businesses and it also guarantees social enterprise development and community engagement. That's actually embedded. It's not a regulation; it's embedded within their legislation. It's right in there. It's part of their values. It's part of their values of how they do business, which again we have this incredible opportunity in the House before us now to have a procurement act that, in fact, reflects our values and what we want to see, and how we spend our money.

A lot of people, for instance, won't buy the cheapest thing for their household because they know there are other considerations. I know that's how we want to do business here. It's not just about the cheapest. As government and as the minister has constantly said in the debate around this issue, we are looking for the best value for our money for our people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's not very well defined in this legislation, in this bill that's before the House, nor is it very comprehensive in looking at issues like a community benefit clause, and that would affect how a proposal is rated, whether or not there are community benefits that come about through this particular procurement. So how we score our proposals that come before us should include

issues like that, should include and be embedded in our policy.

For instance, are we going to say any business that puts forth a proposal to our government, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – say if we're going to get ferries built, do we want to make sure the people who are building those ferries, if they're in another foreign land, that they're being paid properly? Will that be in our legislation? Will we make sure we are not involved in any kind of exploitation of workers in any part of the world?

I see no evidence of that in the proposed – for instance, in Scotland they have a clause in their procurement policy that the companies they do business with have a policy where they achieve a living wage. So that's very interesting, but we haven't seen any of that in the bill that has come before our House.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I believe there are incredible opportunities in this bill that government has not taken advantage of. It's a big bill that governs major expenditures on behalf of the province. We have opportunities to embed our values, as a province, and government has chosen not to do that. I find that regrettable because this was a huge opportunity to do something incredibly progressive and incredibly beneficial for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise one last time and speak to this bill, An Act Respecting Procurement by Public Bodies.

I'm going to reiterate a number of points which have been made and points which I have made as it relates to this particular piece of legislation. Really, the concerns have been outlined. For me, there are two major areas of concern. The first area I have of concern relates to Nalcor. It's less of a concern and more of a sense of a lost opportunity.

As we know, Nalcor is now included under this new procurement act. As I have said, that is a good thing. I support it 100 per cent. I'm very glad to see the government doing that, but I guess where I see the lost opportunity, Mr. Speaker, is there are so many exemptions that are there for Nalcor. Looking down the road, and as I said last night, I look at the Muskrat Falls Project, a project which – again, I will say for the record – as we all know, I voted for in good faith. We've seen all of the overruns and all of the project delays that have happened. We've heard many stories about how contracts perhaps were awarded and cost plus as opposed to performance based.

We've heard stories. We know about where a dome was half built and then torn down. Then came into question, well you have an inexperienced company that got the bid as opposed to an experienced company. If they had gone with the other company maybe it wouldn't have happened, it wouldn't have cost us so much money. It goes on and on and on.

We heard stories about the concrete pour. There are all kinds of issues out there and stories that have been told about concerns at the Muskrat Falls Project and how things have played out in terms of that project, in terms of the contract awards and so on.

So with that in the backdrop, I think we have to learn from those things. We have to learn from those things. Now when there's a section here that exempts Nalcor, when there's any kind of joint partnerships and arrangements and so on. So, again, if we were to develop the Lower Churchill, if we were to do that at some point in time, in partnership with Quebec, because we know there are discussions happening with Quebec, then this would lead me to believe it could be exempt. If we were to do a project, then we are right back in the same boat as we were on Muskrat Falls in terms of procurement and how contracts were let and the public not being aware and how it was done.

Yes, there is a clause that says any contracts awarded would have to be reported to the minister within six months and then it would be reported to the chief procurement officer by the minister and it would be put online and so on. But (a) that's up to six months later; and (b)

even if it's put online, what's going to be put online? To simply say this company was awarded a contract and here's how much we paid them. That doesn't address were proper protocol followed. What procurement practices were followed? How were they awarded? Who else bid? All of those types of things. None of that's there. It's just to put on a computer screen that a certain company got a project.

If we were to do anything in the future, we would be no better off by the process than we are today with Muskrat. I just flag that as a concern and perhaps a lost opportunity.

The biggest piece, though, that I really have concerns with – and this has been outlined a number of times by Members now, including myself, it really comes down to section 28 and section 29 of the act. That's really what it comes down to. Section 28 talks to the regulations that Cabinet will create and section 29 talks about the three regulations around the procurement agency that the minister will create.

A number of those areas are very, very critical to the act overall, to how we do things overall, in terms of how we award contracts. How is that done? How do we deal with suppliers and so on who are not following the contract? What are the repercussions? What are the processes around tendering? All of the meat, if you will, is contained within the regulations.

Every time when a bill comes to the House, we are debating the act and we are not debating regulations. Yes, the Cabinet does make up the regulations, but we're talking about something which I would say, a piece of legislation – first of all, we're just not making an amendment. A lot of times bills come before the House and there's an amendment, so we're changing one or two clauses. That could result in an amendment of one or two clauses in the regulations, but we're talking about actually getting rid of a procurement act and replacing it with a brand new one.

So a brand new act, brand new regulations that we have never seen and an act, by the way, that would be overseeing the expenditure of \$3 billion to \$4 billion – with a B – annually. It's a major piece of legislation. So I have concerns about the fact that there are a number of things

here that we're really not going to be privy to how it gets developed. There are a lot of unanswered questions.

Does that mean we're not going to end up with great regulations? I don't know. I'm not saying that. I'm sure, I am confident that the government and the minister and so on, the Cabinet, will put in the best possible regulations. I'm sure they will. Why wouldn't they? There's no reason for me to believe that they wouldn't. I'm sure they would, but as someone who has to vote for something, and not knowing that for sure, then obviously it's a concern.

Mr. Speaker, as we said, there are many positive things in the bill. Barring the exemption piece with Nalcor, the fact that they're being brought into the act for normal operations is a good thing. The fact that we're going to introduce value for money, I think one could argue is a good thing. Depending on how that value for money is determined – and that's where we get into the regulations again, which we really don't know how that's going to be determined.

The minister answered some questions, did a good job there answering questions and gave us a flavour for where his head is with it. It sounded reasonable to me, but there's nothing written here. There's nothing written here to guarantee that or to know for sure how that is going to work.

From an overall perspective, that concept, I believe, is a good one. Although I would say, as was pointed out to me by a couple of people in business, they did have a concern about – even under a system where it's low bid, quite often you end up with disputes and potential lawsuits and everything else. Now, if you're going to throw in a whole subjective piece with all these different criteria, then that could cause an awful lot more problems in terms of disputes over people getting contracts and not getting contracts.

I'm not saying it can't be done. I'm not saying that there wouldn't be an established matrix out there that makes sense, that could be argued to be fair and legal and so on, but it is a point nonetheless, especially when we haven't seen that particular matrix.

The fact that we're going to be bringing in a number of consultants that weren't covered under the act before, like architects and engineers, now will have to go through the procurement act, that's a positive thing. That's an excellent thing. I support it 1,000 per cent. The fact that we're going to be putting more stuff online for the public to see, disclosure, that's an excellent thing. I support that as well.

So the point is that there are an awful lot of really good things in here that I do support and I know that the time has come, long overdue, to have a new procurement act. Because, as we know, this has been something that's been on the go now for what – I think the minister said 2008 was the date.

AN HON. MEMBER: Too long.

MR. LANE: The Member says too long. Yes, I agree.

So at least eight years and I know it was on the Order Paper, I think, in 2012 and it died. So the fact of the matter is that it is time for a new procurement act. It's something that a lot of people over there, over here, I guess, at the time have called on, or called for at some point in time and I'm glad to see that it's happening.

I have to say though, Mr. Speaker, that I've never been so divided, in my mind, on a bill. This is one that I have to say I have a lot of mixed feelings about and have been unsure right up until today, right up until just a little while ago which way I was going to go, if I was going to vote for it or if I wasn't going to vote for it, to be honest with you; not that it makes a difference in the sense that it's going to pass anyway. We all know it's going to pass anyway. Whether I support it or I don't support, I know it's going to pass anyway, but you have to weigh out – I'm trying to weigh out, I guess, the need and the greater good of having a new procurement act, which I know we need, and weigh that out with the flaws I see in the process and in the way the legislation is written.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I believe there are a lot of really good positive things here. I would have liked to have seen a lot more detail. I think there are a lot of things that are being left to regulations. Instead of being put to regulations,

it should have been included in the bill, or at least the principle of them.

As the Member for St. John's Centre talked about, the values, the principles and so that would guide the regulations. At least then we would have a guide to know that this is how the regulations would work. It would be based on certain principles; it would be based on certain guidelines and so on. I think a lot of those guidelines and principles are missing from the act, and that's really, I think, the big flaw that's there.

There were a number of issues raised in committee and I was a little disappointed. I would have hoped, based on some of the feedback, we would have seen a few amendments brought forward to make some changes but unfortunately that didn't happen, and it never tends to for some reason. I guess that's why this whole concept of legislative committees would make this stuff so much better I think if everyone had that. If there was some input before this ever came to the floor, then some of these issues could have gotten ironed out. Unfortunately, that's not the way it happened, and has never happened really. It needs to start happening, I believe.

I would say before I conclude, that I would certainly recommend to the government – I know in the government's five point plan during the last election – they weren't government at the time, but during the five point plan in the red book it talked about the establishment of all-party legislative committees. That they were going to do that. What better of an opportunity now than to form a small committee to at least oversee the development of these regulations; just to have some oversight and to have some input from people on both sides of the House in the development of the regulations.

I'm not saying they're going to sit down and write them. Obviously, there's going to be qualified staff to write them, but to oversee them. That would be, I think, a great show of good faith to do that and then everybody could be confident in those regulations. I think that would be a great opportunity to do that. I would certainly ask government to consider doing that.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, because I said I've been weighing it back and forth, and I think at the end of the day I am going to support the bill. I'm going to support the bill because I believe we do need a new procurement act. I do believe it is long overdue. I do believe there are a lot of good things contained in the bill, but in saying so, in supporting it, I do want to, as I've just said, go on the record, as other Members have, to say I do have concerns that too much has been left to the regulations that should be in the act itself and I believe there is a lost opportunity as it relates to the exemptions for Nalcor.

Again, I would ask the government to please consider an oversight committee involving Members from both sides of the House to be able to oversee the regulations. I realize that's not common. That doesn't happen as a general rule every time there's a change in regulations, but I think this is a special circumstance. Because it's a brand new piece of legislation, it's an extensive piece of legislation, and it has a huge impact on the province in terms of it's overseeing the expenditure of \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually. It's such a critical piece of legislation, I think to my mind it would make all the sense in the world to have some involvement by Members from both sides of the House to oversee those regulations, sort of as a special circumstance so that we can all be comfortable in what's there.

In the absence of that – and government certainly has the right not to do that and to bring in whatever regulations they see fit. If they do so, and there are things there that I don't agree with, I'm sure other Members would say the same, then we'll definitely be bringing it up in any way we can and lobbying for changes or improvements if they should occur. I think a show of good faith would be to have that oversight committee to oversee these regulations so that we know we're all doing what's in the best interest of the people, we can all agree to it, and then we're all much more comfortable in supporting a bill which is long overdue, much needed, and as I said, has a lot of good, positive things in it that I think we all support.

So with that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. I will be supporting this bill but, as I said, with some hesitancy, if you will, and with throwing those cautions out there. Because I think it's

important to at least put those things on the record. It's an important bill. I don't want to see it stopped. I want to see it go forward, and I hope that other Members can have some involvement to some degree in overseeing these regulations after the bill is passed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, before the minister gets up and closes debate on this very important bill, I wanted just to have a few words because I know the amount of work that has gone into this by the minister and the people in the department. As several Members have alluded to across the way, this bill has been waiting for some time, eight, 10, 12 years, whatever it was. Here we are today on the brink of passing this very important bill for this government and for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. What we've heard from the Third Party and from others is what's not good about this bill, what's bad, the gaps that are in the bill, but they failed to really show how important this bill is and the value it will have to the province.

I'm just going to quickly run through the benefits that we've identified from this bill. The first one is that it moves the focus from just getting the best price to getting the best value. I know several ministers have stood in this House, including the Minister of Transportation and Works, the Minister of Health and others talking about how important it is in going to the marketplace and getting the best value for your dollar. The focus of this legislation and overall approach is to ensure public bodies achieve best value, transparency and accountability from procurement, not just the best price with little regard for other factors.

The second one is that there are more services now included in this act than ever before. This includes engineering services; architectural services; accounting, land surveying and voice telephone services; banking services; insurance services, and other services that were previously not included. This enhanced oversight will help ensure best value again from money spent on these services in the future.

Through this bill, we've expanded the services that will now come under the authority or the guidance of this new *Public Procurement Act*. As the minister has alluded to on several occasions, and through consultations with many stakeholders in the province, there will be an opportunity now to update the thresholds governing buying activity.

We know where things have gone and public bodies require more authority, more flexibility. Many public bodies have told us that the thresholds are very low, and they are. They force public bodies to engage in open calls for bids when the services they needed had a small monetary value, whether it was \$20,000, \$10,000. Now they'll have more flexibility. Municipalities, for argument's sake, with \$20,000, that's going up to \$50,000. So there will be more opportunity for municipalities, then, to be more flexible, to look at local buyers, to keep the local economy going. There's more opportunity for them.

The new act provides an opportunity to increase those thresholds which in turn reduces red tape and supports buying activity, as I've already said. This also provides public bodies the ability to locally source for acquisitions. We've all heard that many, many times over, how important it is to support the local economy. Well, this act will give those public bodies the authority and the permission to do that. That's a good thing.

There will be enhanced oversight. The new act includes changing the Government Purchasing Agency to the public procurement agency to focus on its monitoring and compliance role regarding public procurement. Establishing a chief procurement officer and a procurement advisory council to oversee all public procurement activities across the province, so there will be more oversight. There will be more checks and balances. There will be authorities in place to ensure that everything is done above board and is done in the best interests of the public purse.

The chief procurement officer will be selected through the Independent Appointments Commission process. We all know that is working very well for us. We saw it again today

with the board of Nalcor, how well that's working. It's a good thing.

The advisory council will be comprised of officials from provincial public bodies. They could include municipalities. They could include school boards. They could include the health authorities. So those people will be engaged; those bodies will be engaged in the decision process. What more can you ask for?

Ensuring suppliers can get information about a procurement process after it is awarded, make a complaint, when they see issues with a buying process and be held accountable for their performance. I think the minister really did a good job last night of explaining that and how accountable this act will be and the agency will be when it comes to purchasing and informing unsuccessful bidders why they were unsuccessful and how they can do better for future bids. Again, it's a positive thing.

Engaging in training activity to ensure both buyers and vendors are informed and participating in a transparent and equal opportunity procurement environment. You're opening the parameters; you're opening the opportunities for the business, whether they're small businesses, large businesses or big corporations. It doesn't matter. It provides opportunity.

There will be greater flexibility in the way public bodies purchase what they need. The previous approach was prescriptive and encouraged tenders over RFPs. Well, we're going to support now and we're going to promote, as well, the RFP process. The minister again made that quite clear last night and explained it very well.

The new act will make it easier to use alternative approaches such as RFPs and calls for expressions of interest. This act allows government more regulatory discretion so that public bodies are not forced to use processes that do not maximize value for money.

As you can see, in every principle that's included in this act – we hear from the Opposition and from the Third Party and from the Independent Member that they're weary of what the regulations will be. They're weary that

we won't do a good job on developing the regulations, that the regulations won't reflect the intent of the act. Well, I can assure those Members that the regulations will reflect the intent of the act. And there will be people put in place to develop those regulations that understand what we're trying to do here, and what we're trying to do for the province, for the people of this province and for our public purse.

Some Members keep referring to the fact that the good thing is that Nalcor now will come under the act. Of course, that's a good thing because they have a lot of buying power and they do a lot of purchasing, but understanding where Nalcor is in our province, what purpose they serve and their role in the province, it's only understandable that they would have some flexibility when it comes to the purchasing powers, whether it's through energy or energy products, strategic partnerships. And by the way, that's the future of this province. We have to do what we are going to do to make this province profitable and to make this province successful. We'll have to do it in partnerships, whether that's with Nalcor or any other corporation, partnerships is the way of the future, and again, to reap the requirements of the benefits agreement.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to say that this act – when we took office and I went with the Minister of Service NL, the procurement act became a priority from day one. We knew what we had in place wasn't working. And I can tell you that the people within the department, and officials who were working on this, and have been working on it for the past number of years were encouraged and relieved that we were finally going to do something with this because the consultations have been done for years. They've been done for years, but the previous administration failed to take those consultations and put them into action, put them into reality and put them into legislation, so we're doing that.

Madam Speaker, I want to say thank you to those people and I would encourage everybody in this House to take this procurement act as a way forward. It is a way forward and it's something that we've put in our *Way Forward* vision. It is a vision. We think it's a good way forward, it's a good act, and will meet the needs

of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and will ensure that this government, the people and the taxpayers of this province will get the best value for their money.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you.

I'm assuming now I'm the last speaker and I'll close it on third reading here, Madam Speaker.

Well, it has been a long day yesterday for all of us here and I thank everybody who spoke on the bill and I thank everybody who had their contribution, but I want to recognize the Member for Mount Pearl North. I know yesterday two of us stood up five or six hours at this here and we asked a lot of questions back and forth and got a lot of information out there and I respect that, the questions and the way it went.

I know a couple of other people in the House of Assembly didn't recognize it, but I want to recognize that he recognized that the regulations do come in after the legislation is passed. We all know that in this Legislature. We've been here long enough.

When you get some Members standing up and saying, well, we don't know because the regulations are not here, knowing full well that the regulations come later, it's very disheartening to make statements like that and say why don't we have the regulations.

The Member for Mount Pearl North yesterday, it was a great debate. Thank you very much for digging down deep in a lot of the questions. We went through it in five or six hours. And for recognizing yes, some of this is wait and see what the regulations are and he recognized that.

Madam Speaker, that is part of the debate here. I recognize that and I expect that, and it was a great debate in the House of Assembly. I enjoyed it. It was long, but it was for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can say that to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Member for Mount Pearl North definitely got into the details and definitely brought out every possible detail that he could in that huge act. I just wanted to recognize that, Madam Speaker.

The other thing is the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, talking about the devil is in the details. She's in this Legislature long enough; she knows that regulations are brought in. There are parameters set. The Atlantic procurement act – and if you want a copy of it, I can get you a copy. A lot of the goods and services, that's in there.

I didn't want to do it last night because myself and the Member for Mount Pearl North were having a very healthy educational debate on it and you hear statements from the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi and the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands talking about how Cabinet sets the regulations in section 8. But somewhere they had to read the bill itself. What's being regulated in section 8 by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, what's being regulated, are the two exemptions. The two exemptions are legal and financial. That's what they're saying, is that they want to regulate it. That's the two they can regulate.

If you look at section 8, it says right here in the bill – and giving the impression the Treasury Board will regulate. Obviously, it's an information session. If you go look at section 8, it says there what they can regulate. If I had a copy I would read it. It says very openly in section 8, I'll read it: "The Treasury Board may establish a policy for the procurement of professional services by public bodies."

The two professional services that are excluded are what are in the bill. It's legal and financial. So by giving the impression that Treasury Board could set the regulations for this whole act is not true. It's not true. That's the impression that was given last night.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Okay, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said he didn't do it, but I know the Member for St. John's East – Quidi

Vidi stood up last night – and if that's incorrect, I apologize. I withdraw that. But I know the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi stood up last night because I sat down and made a note of it.

Section 8, all they give is what's already exempt. I can hand you over a copy, marked up, if you want to see it. It highlights – thank you, I didn't know if you needed it or not.

Madam Speaker, the regulations we all know – and the Member for Mount Pearl North, he was deputy premier of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, a very high position; he understands the regulations. I understand regulations are brought in later. We all know that. So for certain Members standing up in this hon. House and saying that we can't do it because of regulations, knowing full well, we gave parameters.

Just think about it, this Read report, 2008, eight years ago it was handed to government. It is over eight years now because it was handed in the summer. Over eight years, this report was handed in here. Now we're bringing this bill in – it was Bill 1 in 2012 when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister at the time to bring it in, we bring in this bill, we have extensive and I mean extensive consultations, broad-based support, yet we see the leader of the Third Party up again saying no, we can't support it.

I'm not sure what the Official Opposition is going to do. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said we have to wait and see what the details are, but he will support it. That's everybody's right in this House to see who's going to support it and not support it, and I feel confident they will. I feel very confident they will because I tell you why. Even the details that they know will come in later, with the regulations, they know this is the best value for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm confident in that. Can you pick out holes and say you should have done this, you should have done that? Maybe, but every time you bring something forward, everybody has a different opinion. If some of the regulations – and I would just want to let general public know this. If there are regulations in this bill that we bring in, the regulations that we bring in, they

will always have an opportunity in this Legislature to ask questions why we did it. They will always have that opportunity.

So the regulations aren't carved in stone. That's why they're regulations; they're flexible. So if somebody in the Opposition, the Third Party or the Independent asks us questions and says, well, why did you put that regulation in there, how can we change it – you think it's better this way. That's why it's regulations, you can change regulations, but you put it in with the best consultation that we had.

I know, again, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi got on last night about women's policy, women's lens and about NLOWE. NLOWE was already a part of this discussion. We're meeting them again Monday. Staff is meeting them again Monday. They were already consulted. Every piece of this bill was put through the Women's Policy Office, went through the disability lens here in the government, Madam Speaker.

So we did do our due diligence. We definitely did our due diligence on this. This is the kind of thing that we as a government pride ourselves on. The Member is saying, well, what can you do concrete. Well, what we did concrete are a number of things. We increased the threshold. We ensured that now a lot of goods and services can be done right in the communities, because the threshold has gone up and local people can partake into it.

I have to say that since we – and I was in the Legislature in 2012 when that was introduced; I was here. I have asked questions on it, when are you going to bring it in, when, we're waiting for it, the province is waiting for it. I'm willing to bet that the Members of the Opposition feel that yes, it should have been brought in. The reasons why it wasn't brought in, that's something I'm not privy to. But I feel confident to have it on the Order Paper in 2012, they feel that this procurement was a great move to improve the *Public Tender Act* and I just want to thank the government here, all the Members on this side who when I took it over as part of Service NL and I said we have to get procurement done, I know all the Members on this side and all the people who were involved were very supportive and wanted it done and supported me along the

way to get it done. I just want to recognize the amount of people that helped me along the way, the department, MHAs here also who went out and sought different views from different groups and organizations.

Madam Speaker, as we said right from day one, this is best value for your money. The best value doesn't always mean that you take the lowest price. This is the evaluation that we did; it is on a matrix system. When you hear some people speaking, it's almost like this hasn't been done before anywhere in the world. RFPs are done on a regular basis. Right now anywhere in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there's an RFP that has to come to Cabinet for approval. It has to come to Cabinet because we haven't given the authority to use the RFPs.

As I mentioned, the Town of CBS, they went out and they are using RFPs with the capital works and what they have already. They're using an RFP already. They came down the other night and they passed a motion in council. It might have been last Thursday night that they posted a motion – or Wednesday night, they passed a motion in council to use RFPs.

So MNL, who represents everybody in this room – every Member in this House of Assembly has membership, their town council has membership in MNL. MNL wanted this. MNL is looking forward to this. MNL, as I said before, when I met with MNL, when I had discussions down at the convention, they were anticipating this and wanted this here.

So for anybody to stand in this hon. House and make statements like we're just ramming this through and people don't know what's in it, it's stretching it. It's stretching it because I can assure you that there have been many, many groups that have been consulted and want this.

I'll just close by thanking everybody who participated in the debate. I thank the government for supporting me to bring this forward. I want to also, for the last time, recognize the Member for Mount Pearl North for the debate that we had back and forth. It was a lengthy debate. It's not very often I get tired in this Legislature but last night, going through it, it was a long debate but I can tell you one thing I enjoyed every minute.

The Member said to me, I'll ask every question and he said I know you'll answer it. I knew that he would ask every question because I know that he was digging into it to get the best information, and I respect that 100 per cent because if we could strengthen this in some way and explain it, that's our job.

The Member for Mount Pearl North, it was a great debate. As we all said, if we can strengthen anything for Newfoundland and Labrador we're all winners. We may debate in the House and, sure, sometimes personalities step in there.

I know sometimes people pick on me because I'm an easy target and that, but I'm all right with that, Madam Speaker. I'm all right with that because I understand the Legislature. I understand how it goes. I understand when people want to pick on me because I don't say much back and I'm easygoing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Madam Speaker, I know this bill was worth it, and I thank everybody for participating in it. For the people that sometimes – we have a personality discussion sometimes, which is part of the debate and I understand. I accept what you were doing as part of the debate. If in some way or form I ever said a word that may have offended somebody in part of the debate, that's just part of the debate.

I see the Member for Cape St. Francis over there smiling. I just have to tell this story about the debate. People sometimes see us in a debate, Madam Speaker. He was over here and I was in government, and I said something to him. He put his fist up to me and said, if I got to come over after you, you'll come over those boards. I stood up on a point of order; I said with two hip replacements we'd better open a gate for you. So that's the kind of bantering going back and forth.

I can tell you, the Member for Cape St. Francis attended the briefing. He asked a lot of good questions. He added to the debate. I just want to recognize that as the critic also for the debate, that he added to the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: With that, I'll sit down. I just thank everybody again for their support. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador will be better off with this procurement than the old *Public Tender Act*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MADAM SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MADAM SPEAKER: The Whips are ready?

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Mr. Warr, Mr. Browne, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Ms. Parsley, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Mr. Lane.

MADAM SPEAKER: Those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers.

Madam Speaker, the ayes: 30; the nays: 2.

MADAM SPEAKER: I declare the motion carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes –

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself here.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Procurement By Public Bodies. (Bill 46)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Procurement By Public Bodies," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 46)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Consumer Protection And Business Practices Act, Bill 52, and I further move that the said bill be now read the first time.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Consumer Protection And Business Practices Act. (Bill 52)

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Consumer Protection And Business Practices Act," carried. (Bill 52)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Consumer Protection And Business Practices Act. (Bill 52)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 52 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Madam Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of Bill 45.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 45, An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act, be now read a third time.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 45 be now read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act. (Bill 45)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 45)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I call Order 4, third reading of Bill 47.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that Bill 47, An Act Respecting The Relocation Of Certain Communities In The Province, be now read the third time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting The Relocation Of Certain Communities In The Province. (Bill 47)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting The Relocation Of Certain Communities In The Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 47)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, third reading of Bill 48.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 48, An Act To Amend The Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, be now read the third time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Hydro Corporation Act, 2007. (Bill 48)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Hydro Corporation Act, 2007," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 48)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I call Order 6, third reading of Bill 49.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that Bill 49, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 6, be now read the third time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 6. (Bill 49)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill is now read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 6,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 49)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 7, second reading of Bill 50.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Lab West, that this bill be read a second time.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 50 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2.” (Bill 50)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I know I confused you a bit there. It’s my fault. Sorry about that. I forgot to add Bill 50 to it.

Service NL Vital Statistic Division registers and certifies a broad range of vital statistics information for residents. This includes the registration of all births, marriages, adoptions, deaths, legal changes and sex designation and legal name changes in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is very common, Madam Speaker, that we share this information for provincial and territorial registrar of Vital Statistics, share event information with other provinces and Territories

in Canada. We share this information all across Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador Vital Statistics have been sharing this across Canada for 30 years.

Sharing information ensures accurate recording of these events for citizens who have moved to other provinces and territories and/or citizens of other provinces and territories who have relocated to Newfoundland and Labrador. So it’s a two-way exchange of information in Newfoundland and Labrador always exchanging with the other provinces and territories. They also exchange the information with us in case people move in the province.

If you ask anybody about Vital Statistics, it’s very important to keep the registry as updated as possible to ensure there is proper identification of citizens and preventing things like identity fraud in the province.

This part here is very important to this bill and why it’s being brought in. The *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* doesn’t provide the registrar with the specific authority to share the vital event information, historically shared with other provinces and territories. The *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* is to be amended to provide the registrar with specific authority.

I just wanted to make it very clear that what we’re doing here is amending the act of 2009 but we have been sharing the information for 30 years. So this has been a to and fro for 30 years. What we’re doing now is ensuring that this act is brought up to what we’re actually doing. We’re just ensuring that the act is being followed. The *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* was amended to bring in the registrar with this specific authority but in 2009 it does not provide the registrar with specific authority to share vital information historically shared with other provinces. What we’re doing is we’re amending this act from 2009 to provide the registrar with the proper authority.

With this here, you can’t call it housekeeping rules but you can say this has been going on for 30 years and we just wanted to ensure that the province has the proper authority to do it and to make sure that we’re in compliance with the rest of the provinces.

One of the biggest questions, one of the biggest concerns that were raised to us was privacy of information. What we have done, we have contacted every province and ensured that their privacy is well protected. We stressed very much – and then again I have to say every province and territory that we contacted, they do have their own privacy legislation and it is covered under their privacy legislation. So it's not that we're just taking the names and information and just sharing it to some group we're not sure of; this is every province in Canada, the territories and they do have their own privacy legislation which is very important.

The big problem with that, Madam Speaker, most legislatures in Canada and territories have legislative authority to enter into sharing of information but do not require them the phasing in or shall not share the information across the province and territory. British Columbia is an example of this.

Some provinces and territories – I read this; it's important also – have legislative authority to enter into information sharing agreements but do not require them. In the phasing, it is may, not shall, to share information across other provinces and territories. British Columbia is prime example of this. They may share it. They do. They may.

So this bill here is to ensure that we're in compliance of the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*. I have to stress this, that each province and territory has a confidential provision similar to that of subsection 40(1) of our province's *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*. This subsection outlines explicit restrictions on the use of personal vital-event information.

That clearly states restrictions on the use of the personal information that we're sharing with other provinces and Territories. That's very important also. Just to let people know that we've been doing it. I've been in governments where back 25 years ago we did it. The former government did it. This is normal.

This is not that anybody did anything wrong in this Legislature, we're just bringing the act – to comply with the act. I know when I sat with the Liberal government here, we done it 30 years ago. I sat in the Legislature when it was done,

the Opposition. So this is something that was brought to our attention and we said we better comply with the 2009 act.

All provinces and Territories are bound by their respective access to information and protection of privacy or equivalent legislation which protects personal information. That's very important. Not only are we explaining what our privacy laws are, the use of personal information, they have their own also.

To reinforce the critical importance of protecting the vital-event information we share, Service NL will remind provinces and Territories of their obligations to protect the vital-event information each time such information is provided. So every time we share information, we will highlight the necessary requirements that we insist upon for confidentiality and the sharing of information.

Every time we share information, we ensure we stress that point about the information and their obligations to protect the event information each time. We try our best and the officials do a great job to ensure that privacy and event information is kept private and just used for the purpose it's supposed to be used for. That is very important.

The *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* does not provide the registrar or a specific authority to share the vital information historically shared with other provinces and Territories. That's very important.

The *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* is to be amended to provide the registrar with a specific authority. This will facilitate continued interprovincial/territorial co-operation. The amendment will also ensure registration systems are current, will ensure proper identifications and will help protect against identity fraud.

In the short version of it, Madam Speaker, this is to ensure we're compliant with the 2009 Vital Statistics. We're doing our best ability as a department and officials to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all information that is being shared.

I also want to point out, that when information is shared to us, the same concerns are expressed by the provinces and Territories when they share with us about the confidentiality and the

agreements we have in place that we must do our utmost to protect the privacy, protect the personal information and events situation.

So I'll sit down now. I welcome comments from the Opposition and the Third Party and independent if so be, but that's the gist of the bill.

I thank everybody, because I feel very confident that people will support this bill. This is a very important bill and I feel very confident that we want to ensure we're in compliance with the act.

Thank you.

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

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

First of all, I'd like to thank the folks at Service NL for the briefing they gave. People look at legislation that comes to the House of Assembly, and that's one part people have to understand – you look at different departments in government and people will always ask you the question about Service NL, and I'll always say it's the department that got you from the time you're born to the time you die, because it seems like it got everything in between.

Service NL, like I said, the officials over there gave us a briefing and I really want to thank them, because they did explain what's happening in this bill. They always do give a good briefing. So I want to just thank the people over there.

This bill is to amend the *Vital Statistics Act*, and it's going to allow the Registrar General to share vital statistics information with Registrars General in all other provinces and Territories. Like the minister just alluded to a few minutes ago, this is something we've been doing for 30 years. It's bringing the act in to say that we can do it now, basically.

If you look at section 41, it says the minister may enter into information sharing agreements. It specifically mentions specific groups which information can be shared with. Places like the Centre for Health Information, and Statistics

Canada are two bodies which are currently mentioned in the legislation. The bill will now allow Registrars General of all provinces and Territories to be on that list.

It should be also noted that the sharing of information has been done for at least 30 years with no legislation of authority to do so. What we're doing, we're just bringing this legislation into something that we always did. It should also be noted that all other provinces have provisions to do this. So we're just getting into what other provinces are already doing.

It's so important today that we protect individual's rights. A lot of times now, as MHAs and Members of the House of Assembly, we'll get requests from individuals to do things on their behalf. I know everyone right now has to get consent. First when I got elected, we never had to do that. You called over and you got information over from different departments about individuals and stuff like that, but things have changed. Things have really changed.

It's an individual's right to be able to have privacy and it's an individual's right to have their privacy protected. If a person doesn't want to share that information with anyone, that's a right that they have. As legislators, what we do in here – and I do it all the time in my district.

I'll have an individual call up and ask me to act on their behalf, to go to a minister, ask a question, check and see. It could be medical records. It could be private, their personal stuff when it comes to, for example, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and stuff like this. You're dealing with financial records or all different things like that. So a person's right to privacy is so important.

The minister mentioned a few minutes ago, this legislation does protect the rights of the individual. Nobody shall be without consent. There's no way that any consent can be given from the province. If the province sends up statistics to another province, that province cannot send that to a third party. That is protected under this legislation, and it's protected under all the different legislation all over Canada.

We look at the reasons for this. The minister just explained a few minutes ago why we need to do this, to validate the vital statistics information of individuals who are moving from province to province. That's really important because sometimes medical records, for example, could be very important that they are able to move because that's a life in that situation, that somebody could have some kind of conditions and stuff like that. It could be noted in their medical records – and to be able to move those records to a province so that that's on file if something serious happens to somebody, at least they're not going through and trying to check out did he have this or did he have that or whatever. It's important that we do move this information.

The other thing that is very important and it's something that happens – we see it in the media a lot – and a lot of times it doesn't seem it would happen to you, is identity theft. Today, we live in a world where people give to their visa cards and give out information. Sometimes I just feel if you get a phone call, you give out too much information. Identity theft is something that's happening every day. It's billions and billions and billions of dollars that's happening worldwide. It's important that we protect individuals from this.

We want to make sure, through this bill, that personal information is not given away, that personal information is protected whether it's your home number, whether it's your address, whether you're single or married, whether it's how many children you have because today people look at that – I know last year I heard on an open line show one day, I heard an elderly gentleman call in.

I believe he said he was 80 years old and somebody called him and asked him this information. In a lot of cases, we'll give the information out. They'll just give the information to people and say if you ask the question, you're going to get an answer, but we have to make sure that people are so aware of information that you give out today can be used against you down the road. It's very important.

Something that this bill does is it really does protect against that. We want to make sure – this is important – if we're going to share

information with other provinces that information is safe. I believe this bill does that because it's something that we did for 30 years and other provinces have it in place.

Another part of this bill, with the briefing when we went over to Service NL, it was a real good briefing, one of the questions was: Was the Privacy Commissioner consulted on the bill? Yes, he was. Again, the question I asked: What was his response to this? Apparently, he was satisfied with the bill and said that it does the proper thing. It protects the rights of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that their information will be safe when we do, through the Registrar General, be able to move it from one province to another.

It's an important part that we do consult with people like the Privacy Commissioner because they get a lot of complaints all the time. They get complaints from organizations; they get complaints from individuals that their privacy is being breached.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order please!

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

I was hoping they'd all be listening to me.

But anyway, it's an important piece of legislation that we have here today. Again, like I said, it's a good piece of legislation. I wouldn't call this housekeeping. I'd call this piece of legislation protection of individuals. It's important that we do it right. It's important that we stay in line with other provinces. It could be something down the road that it's important to a life situation that somebody may need this information and need it very, very quickly.

It's also important that the information is protected. That's what the minister mentioned a couple of times there that it would be protected. He also mentioned that individual's rights – and it's so important today. Like I said, years ago if you called anyone, they'd tell you how much money is in their bank account, one time. Today, people prey on individuals who give up that information. It's a sad situation sometimes.

Usually it's elderly and other people in society that are vulnerable to identify theft that people prey on.

Again, this won't happen. It's a good piece of legislation that I know we will be supporting. It's something that was done in the past and it was done, like I said, for 30 years but this legislation now puts it into law really. It's important that the Centre for Health Information and Statistics Canada do have the information that they need to ensure that people's privacy is protected and the information that is needed to protect ourselves down the road will be done.

Basically, it's a good bill and we will be supporting it.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm happy to stand and speak to Bill 50 today, to amend the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*. I agree with the minister and I thank him for his opening comments, and thank his staff for the briefing that they gave to us. I agree with the minister that this is not just a housekeeping bill. I think it is an important bill because what it does is gives protection of law to something that's going on informally. So the sharing of information from one jurisdiction to another by Registrars General has been going on, as he said I think, for three years.

Since it has been going on, it's been tested and it has been tested under the bill which exists and, as such, will continue and therefore it does need the protection of law, and that's what's happening here.

I did have some concerns when I first read the bill and read about the sharing of information, but when I looked at the purposes for which the information is shared, it made sense to me. As we all know, privacy has become extremely important and sensitivity around sharing people's information has really increased in our society.

It's rather strange; it has increased at a time when, through social media, we seem to be so much not private. But when it comes to our formal structures, people's privacy has become very important and sharing anybody's information is something that we should just be so very, very careful about. That's why the act that's being amended does have a strong section in it on privacy.

Certainly we know that the Registrars General would be, more than anybody I think, aware of the heavy responsibility they carry because they have the ability share information.

In section 40 of the act that's being amended it is actually a secrecy clause, plus there are provisions in our ATIPPA act in section 7 and section 69.9. That act takes precedence over every other act. So it is extremely important that we honour the need for secrecy and privacy.

But when we look at the purposes for which Registrars General share information these too are very important. One, for example, is to validate the ID of people moving between provinces. If I'm moving to another province and I'm starting to register in that province for the services of that province and to be a citizen in that province and be recognized to have the right to vote, to be able to access health care in that province, et cetera, I need to have proof of who I am. If another province has a reason for needing further validation, then being able to communicate with the Registrar General of my home province helps them do that.

There's also the need for this information sometimes if there has been ID fraud. This is something that can be very serious, as we know. Also, there's a *Change of Name Act* section. Again, proof of a person's identity, proof of who the person is, is extremely important for that. Also, someone who is trying to get on the voters list in another province may need validation of their identity. Then there's also the whole thing of child support. Personal information sometimes needs to be shared from that perspective.

There are very valid times at which it may be important for information to be shared. It has been said that information is already being shared and by putting it in Bill 50, our *Vital*

Statistics Act, we are now giving the protection of the law to that practice. I would say the protection of law is also needed to protect those who carry on the practice so that we now have something that they can be monitored from, which I think is extremely important.

I do know, according to the briefing that we had, the Information and Privacy Commissioner was consulted on this act to make sure it fit under the whole need – our privacy laws in this province. The commissioner was satisfied that this is the case.

The bill that we're passing introduces a new subsection 41(2)(c) adding vital statistics registrars from other provinces and territories to the list of bodies lying outside the requirement for formal agreements. Something strange, which I'm quite not sure about, and the minister could explain to us, in the new subsection it says the sharing of information will happen with registrars in another province, and it means territory as well.

Well, a territory is not a province. I'm just wondering why it doesn't say another province and/or territory to make it specific, because it is the practice. If it means territory as well, province doesn't include territory. Whenever we see those words together, it's always province and territory, provincial/territorial. So I don't know why that wasn't done, why that wasn't actually written into the bill. It seems like a bit of a logical thing to me.

I don't think it's a serious thing, but from a legal perspective, I just question, legally, would province legally standing alone in the act also mean territory? Because there'll be nothing there saying, well, this also means territory. So why doesn't it say province and/or territory? I just put that out. I just find it as a bit of a curious thing.

In the meantime, we have no issue with the bill. We think it's important that this practice will be put into our act and will give the protection of law to the practice, which will also hold the registrars general accountable for the sharing of this information, because now that the practice is in the act, then it is covered by the secrecy clause in this act as well. It also will be covered, of course, by the ATIPP act. So I think it's good

that this is happening. Like the minister said, and as I've said, it's more than housekeeping. This is due diligence, actually, that this be put in the act.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a minute to speak to this particular bill, and I'm not going to reiterate all the points that have already been made. I think they've been made well by the Members who have spoken. Other than to say, really as has been said, that we're taking a practice which has been in existence since 2009 and we're going to make it legal to do what we've already been doing.

Now, I would question, I suppose, or I would have to ask the question – I will when we get to committee – how we could possibly be doing something that we weren't legally permitted to do for some 28 years, and now all of a sudden somebody discovers that or whatever. I don't know how that actually occurred, but be that as it may, if that's what we need to do to make what we're doing in practice legal and within the legislation, then obviously everybody here is going to support that, I would imagine.

Based on that, I will be supporting it. I do concur that obviously we have to ensure that if we're going to be sharing information that all privacy protocols are in place. I understand from commentary by the minister that is indeed in place in all the provinces and so on. There seems to be no concern about privacy breaches and so on. We wouldn't want any identify theft or anything to occur like that.

So as long as all those measures are in place and what we're doing here is basically taking a practice that we've been doing for, as I said, some 28 years and changing the legislation so that we actually have the authority to do what we've already been doing, then there's no reason why we wouldn't all be wanting to support that. I certainly will.

Thank you.

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise today and speak to this bill. As has been noted by the Opposition, I think this is a good move and something that we recognize that needed to be done as well.

As the minister has said all along, this is putting in place the authority for Vital Statistics to share information with other provinces even though, as the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands has indicated, this has been going on for some time. Well yes, it has been going on for some time. And we've gotten away with it, I guess, is the best way of putting it. But we want to make sure that this now is enacted in legislation so that we are not put in a position where we're doing something that we shouldn't be doing. That's basically what we're doing here.

It's a common practice for provincial and territorial registrars of Vital Statistics to share this information with other provinces and territories in Canada and they've been doing that for years – for 30 years as a matter of fact.

The *Vital Statistics Act 2009* did not provide the registrar with the special authority to share this information. So I guess we were doing it without the authority to do so. So whether we were doing it illegally or not I guess is a matter of interpretation but, like I said, we've gotten away with it for years.

This is something that we're doing and, putting this in place, we're also making sure that the privacy is protected of those individuals for sharing the information whether it's certificates of birth, marriages, adoptions, deaths, legal changes of sex designation and legal name changes. So this has to be controlled by confidentiality. As the minister pointed out in his briefing, we are going to ensure that all the privacy is protected in all provinces and territories within Canada.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. This is a good piece of legislation. It's more indication that we are taking our legislation very seriously and doing what needs to be done to

make sure that we are not put in a position of liability or discourse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Service NL speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the parliamentary assistant, the Member for Lab West, again for his words. He's filling in as usual. To all the Members who spoke on this bill, thank you very much.

As we said – and I'll be very brief – people can be rest assured that the privacy legislation of Newfoundland and Labrador is impressed upon every province and territory that the information is shared. Also, when we get information back, our privacy legislation is adhered to for all the information we received.

So I thank everybody for the bill. Now we'll be in compliance with the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*. I just want to thank everybody who participated in the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 50 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2. (Bill 50)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a second time. When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 50)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 50.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 50, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2.” (Bill 50)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I know in some of the information surrounding the bill from officials there was reference made to the Privacy Commissioner. He was consulted, which is certainly something that the Privacy Commissioner, in his role, respects and wants to be part of any legislation.

There was reference to the fact that there were some questions raised. I’m just wondering what were some of the concerns or if there were issues that the Privacy Commissioner had.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: The Privacy Commissioner; we just ran it by him because we were doing it for 30 years. What he wanted us to do is to ensure that we stress upon all the provinces and territories that here’s our privacy legislation. We want to ensure that we impress upon them that to the best of their ability, which they all have their own privacy legislation, ours be adhered to. He also wanted to ensure that when we receive information, to ensure the other provinces and territories – that their privacy is protected when it comes to it.

As I mentioned in the few words that I had, we want to ensure every time we share information – every time – we stress what our privacy is. We expect that the privacy will be adhered to as is in our province and that’s been the agreement. As we said, it’s been on the go for 30 years now. He just wanted to ensure we stress that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John’s East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I’d just like the minister to give me an idea of why the bill did not spell out province and territory. We’ve been told it means territory, but province doesn’t mean territory. So if it does, why wasn’t it included? I don’t understand why not.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: I'll just ask: Can you repeat that because I was just speaking to someone.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The bill says that the registrar of Vital Statistics or a person holding an equivalent position in another province. That's who the information will be shared with. In the briefing it was indicated that this means also another territory. The thing is a province isn't a territory and vice versa.

Why didn't we just spell out a position in another province and/or territory? Why isn't it spelled out? The two things are different. Legally, it doesn't cover territory. It only covers province, legally.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: I'll take that under advisement and get back to you. I'm assuming when the act was done it meant all provinces and territories, but I will check that out and get back to the Member.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, I was wondering what safeguards are in place for breaches and stuff like that to reassure the information that does go to other provinces – that there are proper checks and balances that are done on that to make sure. We hear that's a common thing we do here, that sometimes different organizations – it could be an individual, it could be a group or whatever, do.

I'm just wondering, are there some checks? Because that would be very important that this is done so the information is not shared with someone else.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: The checks are that if we know there is information shared and they have to adhere to their privacy act, so do we. If there's any information shared, the person has to be notified. So that is part of it. If it goes out for some way, like we do here sometimes, when there's a mistake made that the person is notified.

The checks would be to ensure that their privacy legislation is up to the standard and we stress on what our privacy legislation is. We ask all provinces and territories to adhere to our privacy legislation to the best of their ability what they have in place.

So the checks and balances are, before we send any information, we want to ensure their privacy is to the standard, that they're adhering to the standard. If there's a breach, the person will be notified, like we do now in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A question for the minister; I'm just wondering how is the information shared? Is it done electronically or is it couriered in an envelope? If it is electronic, is there some encryption? How does this information get shared, do you know?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: The information can be shared electronically but it's through a secured site. For example, if there's something a bit larger, it can be couriered however they do it, but all the information that's transferred in any way is secure. People can rest assured that all information, for example on the government website, is secure. For example, in our hospitals today it's all secure.

There is a procedure in place to send out information. There's a procedure in place to receive information. They are all on secured sites. There are protocols in place to ensure that

all protection of privacy is in place and is up to the standard met by the Privacy Commissioner here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Just one final question for the minister, Madam Chair. As I rise here in second reading, I'm just curious if the minister knows – and I realize the minister has only been there a year and this goes back some 28 years. It was mentioned that we've been carrying out a practice for basically 28 years that we didn't have the authority to do. I'm just wondering how that could happen for 28 years.

Does this piece of legislation have to be reviewed periodically? Does all legislation get reviewed in the department periodically? How could we end up going 28 years before somebody realized they were doing something they didn't have the authority to do?

The minister may not know. I'm just wondering if he did receive an explanation because that would be a question I would ask: How could this have happened?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: I'm not sure. I can honestly say I'm not sure how this could happen. It may have been an oversight where it was always passed back and forth.

This act was revised in 2009. This is the *Vital Statistic Act*. I'm not sure how that happened. It may have just been an oversight whereby they've been doing it for so long. I really can't say, but it was brought to our attention and we said let's just fix the loophole.

Madam Chair, just with the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, I noticed under the *Interpretation Act*, provinces – territories are included under the *Interpretation Act*. That was there in the information because right now if you say the provinces, it includes all the territories under the *Interpretation Act*. That's why the territories are left out.

CHAIR: All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 50.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 50.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked that I report Bill 50 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 50 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call from the Order Paper, Motion 3, which concerns the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly.

With leave of my colleagues, I'd like to ask leave to not read the entire motion into the record again, as I did so the other day. It's quite lengthy, and I wonder if I could get leave from my colleagues to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. A. PARSONS: I thank my colleagues, and I think they made the right decision there for their own best interest as well.

Mr. Speaker, just a couple of days ago – sorry, and that's seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, the Minister of Natural Resources.

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

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

Just a couple of days ago, we moved a resolution into this House – and for those that are watching online, this resolution can be found in what we call the Orders of the Day, the paper that's put out every day that talks about the business being conducted in the House of Assembly.

I read it into the record – I guess that would have been last week I believe. The days seem to flow here. We've had a late night, so everybody is a little tired. The fact is what we have here is a motion that has been put forward by myself, as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee. It's about the work that has been done by a Standing Orders Committee that has been comprised of Members of all sides of the House.

For the record, the Members that have attended meetings on this would be my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources; my colleague, the Member for St. George's – Humber; my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl North. The Member for Conception Bay South – Bell Island attended some meetings. The Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi also attended some meetings as well. We were the elected Members,

people that were put here by our caucuses and by our colleagues.

I'd also like to thank some Members that took the time to sit in on this as well from various capacities. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, you've sat in your capacity as the Speaker of the House of Assembly. I don't know if people can see them on TV, the three ladies sitting at the table here, and I'll just say it's Sandra, Elizabeth and Lorna. Anybody that knows House procedure knows their involvement in this House. The wisdom and the insight they brought into this has certainly guided us very well in the meetings that we had to discuss this.

I'd also like to thank Kim Hawley-George from the Department of Justice, who also sat in on this, as well as Mark Fleming and Megan Sheppard who sat in on this. I think I've covered off everybody that has been a part of this. If I forgot anyone, hopefully I'll remember it by the time I close debate on this motion.

I'd like to sort of look at this by starting off talking about the Standing Orders. For those that may be watching, I'm holding in my hand a copy of the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly. These are the rules that govern our House; they've been around for some time. There are about 125, plus an appendix there. They're quite dated, but these are the rules that we follow. These are the rules that govern our conduct, that govern this House, that govern this Legislature.

As I've said, these have been around for some time. There has been revision to them over the years, but I'm happy to note the changes that we're putting in are the first changes in over a decade to the Standing Orders of this House of Assembly. I think that's noteworthy because certainly, like anything, we all have a respect for tradition, but we also all know that when it comes to Legislatures, we evolve, we change and we have to adapt to modern technology, to modern realities. So that's what we tried to do here.

Part of my role as Government House Leader, part of my mandate letter given to me by the Premier was to talk about things like reform of the House of Assembly, democratic reform. It's something that I've tried to take seriously. I

know it's a concern that has been shared by Members opposite as well. That has been noted by the fact that not long after I had the opportunity to come into this role, I had a conversation with my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, and we talked about where our heads were on this. Our thought was that we'd like to make this House of Assembly more functional. We'd like to make it better operating. We'd like to make it reflect the realities that we deal with right now in 2016 going forward and not from years past. We'd like to make it more family friendly.

There are a number of reasons that we've come at this. It's that we think a better Legislature is better for the people of this province. Better operating rules allow us to do our jobs better and that's in the best interest of the people that place us in this House, the people that we answer to. That was one of the guiding factors.

One of the issues that we've discussed, and that really we talked about a lot over our meetings, was the fact that when it comes to the makeup of this House – there are a couple of factors we noted – there are not as many young people that are interested in sitting in the House. Sometimes the reason can be family concerns and the fact that this is tough job.

Anybody watching last night, we all sat in this House last night until 12:30 and that's tough. I look at Members opposite, I look at Members on our own side, we have families and it can be tough. It can be extremely tough trying to do this and that's one of the things.

I actually had the question asked to me; they said is it just about your Members. I say, Mr. Speaker, it's not. It's not even close to being about us. It's about the people that help do the work that allow us to sit here. It's about the staff that you don't see here on TV. It's about the staff that is working in the Hansard office. It's about the staff that is working in the Broadcast Centre. It's about the staff working at the Table. It's about the staff working in departments. It's about the staff working in the Third Party offices. It's about the staff working in the Opposition Office. There are a lot of people that help us do our jobs and a better functioning House makes for a better life for them.

Again, we think that in many ways the changes we have here will bring us in line with the rest of Canada. In many ways we are behind the rest of Canada, the rest of the legislatures when it comes to our rules. So that's the guiding principle. We had this conversation.

I reached out to my colleagues opposite. Again, they responded very quickly; we put the committees together. I can't remember how many meetings, but I think we may have started meeting in July. We had meetings in August, September. We had a number of meetings. We've had more meetings since July than there were during the entire last session of the House of Assembly.

That's a credit to –

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: The last 10 years.

In fact, the House Leader of the NDP said the last 10 years. She would know, she's been here this last 10 years. I think that's a credit to all the Members of this House because we know that it's important and we'd like to see that change.

So when we got together at our first meeting, along with the staff, we talked about how did we want to go at this. There was a review done of the Standing Orders some time ago. It was quite comprehensive. One of the thoughts that we had was that the Standing Orders are quite lengthy, there's a lot to it. If we try to tackle it all, we might end up in a situation where we don't get anything changed until the end of a session and it gets put off, when we get into this cycle that we get in to and we might lose it.

So an agreement was made where we said why don't we pick some of the things we think we can change now; why don't we pick a few things, work on those. We already have a commitment amongst Members that this committee is not going to be right now, this committee is going to be ongoing during our term.

We have changes now that we've put forward and we'll vote on today. Then, hopefully this committee will sit during the next session in the spring and make changes hopefully for the

session after. And we'll continue to do that. We can go at these Standing Orders on a piecemeal basis, but one that allows for gradual change and allows us to get work done.

So far it's worked well because the fact is we have a report that we've tabled here in the House, and we have a resolution that's here and it's going to be voted on. That, Mr. Speaker, is progress. So I thank, again, my colleagues for their help and their support on this.

I've covered off a number of the things I wanted to bring up. I want to talk about the motion itself. My colleagues will have a chance to stand and speak to this and give their views on it. I won't be too comprehensive. Anybody that's interested, I invite them; these things are all publicly accessible. People can get this and see and have a look at it. People can get the Standing Orders and have a look at it.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, not everybody is interested in this; we're getting into the minutia. But there is a couple; maybe one reporter that I think is interested in it, maybe two. They are interested in it. I think the changes we see are substantive in nature, and people will see the benefit by the changes and the practical changes that we've introduced here and that we'll vote on.

The first one we've talked about is something as simple as quorum. Not a substantive change. It's substantive but we looked at it. The fact is that the number of Members in this House has changed over the course of the last number of years. At one point it was 52, then it went to 48 and in the last couple of years it is at 40. That number has changed over the years but the number for quorum hasn't changed. It was at 14.

So what we did was we looked across the country. Again, that's where I thank the staff who did the hard work for this. They would do the work, the research that we would get to look at. So when we looked across the country we saw quorum numbers and how it worked. Quorum is important because it means the number of people that you have to have in the House in order to conduct business.

What we've done is we've made a number that's reflective of the numbers sitting in the House. It

also does include the Speaker. It never did previously, but it does in other jurisdictions and we thought it would be best practice here. So what we've done is we've had the number of Members for quorum brought from 14 down to 10, including the Speaker. That's basically 25 per cent of the MHAs. If the number of MHAs were to change, to go up or down in the future, hopefully this is a percentage that can be applied that will make some sense, rather than just picking an arbitrary number and having that conversation, which could lead to a debate.

When we replace these sections there are a number of other sections that, in many cases, may stay the same or very similar. But the big substantive change for number one, relates to Standing Orders 12 to 14 and that relates to the quorum. We get into Standing Order 15. Not wholly substantive there, but we talk about when the hon. Lieutenant Governor is arriving and about the quorum present. These are all things that have to change procedurally to fit what we're trying to do.

The next one we get into is Standing Orders 22 and 23 where we talk about the withdrawal of strangers and the conduct of strangers and visitors. One thing I'm very proud of is that the research was done. We looked at the fact that – and again, coming back to something I said earlier – we all feel we need more young people interested in politics. But when you look around this House and you look at the gender representation, we also need more women. We need that.

Actually, I was at a session the other night that was put off where I had my colleagues, female parliamentarians, we had municipal politicians talking about this very issue. I was really interested when I saw an article that was put forward from Alberta where in Cabinet out there Premier Notley put two females who were pregnant into Cabinet. And the fact that they changed their Standing Orders to allow them to have their babies on the floor of the Assembly, that's a big change and that's a sensible change. What are we, not going to have capable, qualified people unable to be on the floor of the Legislature because they're nursing mothers? I actually saw the picture and it's amazing. That's what we need.

So we had this discussion and it was unanimous that we want to do more to ensure we have that here in this House. We want to do more to ensure that if that – and we didn't want to wait for the situation to arise and then change it. We've seen that in the past.

I think we had a female Cabinet minister from the previous administration that may have been, I think, one of the first females that we talked about maternity leave. I can say her name. It was Charlene Johnson. That was an issue that hadn't been brought up and was changed when she was here and obviously became pregnant. In that case, it was a change after the situation arose. In this case, we said let's talk about the change and make sure we all know we want this change before the situation arises, because we think that would be encouraging to encourage females to run.

So that's one of the things we talked about, and again, unanimity across the board on that one. That was one of the guiding principles as we talked about this, making this House more accessible and wanting more people to run.

The next one we head down to – and this is a pretty substantive change. Actually, I brought a private Member's resolution in my first year of the House of Assembly, back in 2012. The calendar for the House of Assembly is not an actual Standing Order; it's an appendix to the Standing Orders. So it's not an actual number. The calendar is very loose.

We've had situations in the past where the Legislature is not open and it could be done at the whim of a government. That's not going after any particular government. That's going at any government because I'm sure governments have done it, whether they are PC or whether they are Liberal. We understand situations when there are elections in the fall and that makes it difficult.

What we wanted to do was take this calendar and actually change it and put it in place and implement something new. One of the big issues that we have – it's an issue for every single person who's associated with the House, associated with the staff, associated with the departments – you never know when the House of Assembly might open. We've had situations

where you're trying to plan life, trying to plan events, and that's everybody. That's researchers. That's people doing the drafting work. That's anybody. So what we wanted to do is we wanted to change the annual calendar. We deleted Standing Order 8 to 11 and we've substituted a calendar.

What it's saying here is that for the two sessions – traditionally we have the winter-spring and we have the fall sitting. So we're saying, "(a) for the Winter-Spring sitting, commencing not later than the first Monday in March and concluding not later than the first Thursday in June; and (b) for the Fall sitting, commencing not later than the first Monday in November and concluding not later than the first Thursday in December." We wanted to put that in.

One of the questions might be then, well that's sort of prescriptive and you must be stuck to that. No, when you go down through it, I think we've done a good job. Full credit goes to the staff for doing the share of the work here to make sure we had something that could be put in there that could be read and it was legible and coherent. Certainly, it wasn't me who came up with it.

A couple things, "(2) The House shall not meet on the days which are paid Government Holidays." That's standard. That hasn't changed.

"(3) During the sittings held under Standing Order 8(1), there shall be (a) one constituency week for every three sitting weeks unless varied by the calendar ... and (b) a break commencing after the end of the sitting day on Maundy Thursday until the third Monday following that date.

"(4) In a calendar year in which there is a general election, the Government may indicate to the Speaker that the commencement of a sitting will be postponed or varied or that there will not be a sitting and the Speaker shall inform Members.

"(5) On or before January 31 of each calendar year, the Clerk, following consultations with the Government House Leader shall distribute to all Members a calendar indicating the intended sitting days for the next calendar year.

"(6) On or before January 31 immediately after the commencement of this Standing Order, the Clerk shall also prepare and distribute in accordance with Standing Order 8(5) a calendar for the sitting days of the current calendar year.

"(7) If the Government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at any time because of emergency or extraordinary circumstances, a reason for the recall must be provided and the Speaker shall advise Member that the House will sit. Also either sitting can be shortened or extended after the passing of a motion with notice made by the Government House Leader which shall be decided without debate or amendment.

So what that does is, (a), it allows for flexibility to take into account that you never know when you get into any sitting if you need to extend it or shorten it for various reasons. You can get into a sitting where – and this one is actually a good example. As Government House Leader, we've got a lot of legislation that's coming. It changes, it evolves and everybody knows that. If you had a defined date where you're going to end, that's going to prohibit you from implementing your agenda and from getting legislation out here for debate, so we have the ability to extend a sitting. In most cases, nobody is going to disagree with that. Especially if you're in Opposition, you're not going to disagree with the House being extended.

It also allows us the power to shorten a sitting. Now, you might say: Well, why would you do that? I would suggest any government that does that does it at the peril of political harm and that's a discussion that we had. So again, we have prerogative to do that but the same as before, when you keep the House closed there's a political price to pay for doing something like that. But it gives us as government – and how it should be – the ability to extend the sitting.

The other thing that it allows us to do, Mr. Speaker, again, emergency sittings or extraordinary circumstances; we did deal with that once during the last session where I think we were in here in January to discuss electoral boundaries. That was something that the government had the authority to do so they could give notice to the Speaker, the Speaker let everybody know and we come in here. We need

that. You never know when an emergency is going to come up. That power is still there.

I'm looking at here some of these dates. I have to be honest, Mr. Speaker, one of the conversations that we had – and we're here now, it soon will be December and we have a lot of legislation. I've always said this, I've said it before and I'll say it right here on record, I can remember being here during one particular debate where we were here on December 23. I don't think a lot of great work gets done December 23. I tell you it is certainly hard – we expect it, but when you have staff coming up to you and they're crying because they might not get home with their kids, that hits you and I don't think that is what this Legislature needs to do. And that's why I'd like to see us sit earlier.

So we have that power and we're going to put it out in a calendar before January 31 where we say here's the calendar for the full year, here's when we're going to start, here's when we're going to finish. It allows for those emergency circumstances. It gives people to plan, to deal with their constituencies, to look after their constituencies. Maybe not so much in the urban areas, but especially in the rural areas it takes a while to get around to your district. We have places that are hard to get access to and sometimes you will get late notice that the House will be starting up in a week's time and you never had a chance to get around to certain spots. I know that also affected other Members because no matter what side you sit on, you have meetings going on all over the province and maybe out of the province.

So this will give us some certainty in our scheduling, which again I think will allow for better legislation, better legislators and better planning for everybody. If you can't plan, that's not going to lead to any productivity as far as I'm concerned.

The other big change there, we've discussed it. I would note, Mr. Speaker, this is a pilot that we're going to try, and try it out for a year to see how it works. Hopefully if it works, we can remove the pilot phase from it.

Many people know that Ottawa, the House of Commons, their Parliament has constituency weeks every three weeks or so. Their schedule is

also laid out well in advance, similar to this. They already know what the schedule is for 2017. It's already there. You can find it out. There's no guess work.

They also allow constituency weeks. Usually it's every three weeks you're sitting, and then you come back to your constituency. As you can imagine, there are long distances there. Well, we have this right here in our province. We have a large province, a large geography. We believe it's going to allow us an opportunity, especially during – this is one session now where we've only been out here a couple of weeks, two or three weeks, but that spring session last year is just one example. We started in March and we're here until June; a lot of legislation, a lot of issues, a budget that was widely discussed.

This gives you an opportunity on a regular basis to go back to your constituency, the people who put you here and have a chat with them and talk about the things we're debating, the hot issues, the important issues, the legislation, anything at all. It allows you a chance to get back to the people that put you here. It does allow you a chance to go back and to deal with regular issues, to be back in your office handling the matters that are piling up in all of our constituency offices.

So we're going to try that. It seems to work for Ottawa. I think it leads to a good work life balance, and that's one of the things we want to do here. I think it will allow also an opportunity – because it's one of those things where it's like the iceberg, when we look at legislation, what we see here is the finished copy. What do they say about the iceberg? You only see it a little bit. What you don't see underneath is tremendous. It's the same thing with legislation. We see the finished product here but the amount that we don't see, the work that goes on is huge.

This will allow also for a better opportunity, in my opinion, for the legislative draft work to go on, and that's going to lead to better legislation in this House. Down the road this is also going to help us I think, because one of the issues that has been mandated to me, it's been brought up by us when we were in Opposition, us when we were in government, Members on the other side, is legislative committees. That, Mr. Speaker, I can promise you right now as sure as I stand

here, we are going to have legislative committees back in this House of Assembly during our mandate. I can guarantee you that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: I was amazed because it's something that is foreign to us. I haven't seen it, and I don't think – actually, I think Mr. Speaker, and the Member opposite, the longest serving; there had been legislative committee meetings here in the past, and staff did a great job. They were happening regularly in the '90s, regularly, right up until about 2002.

It's not something we're discussing here, but it is something we are going to discuss and I think it's going to allow for better debate and better legislation. But right now, as a committee, that's one of the issues we're going to talk about down the road and hopefully figure out, and make sure that we bring a good process back in. It affects us all. That's one of the issues we want to deal with. So that's the schedule part.

Now moving on, Daily Sittings; the only big change we made there, we talked about the fact that if we're going to have a constituency week, which is a week gone where we are not here in the House, we need to find a way to get more work done. We didn't feel the need to have more night sittings. Night sittings are a productive tool in order to get work done. We did it last night. I'd rather sit at night than sit December 23, but I'd rather avoid the process wholly if we could. I don't think anybody wants it; it's a necessary evil to getting work done.

One thing we discussed, we don't want to put work going on past the regular hour. Because right now it allows people an opportunity to finish at a regular hour and go be a part of their community, be a part of their constituency and deal with their families, as well as the staff who help us do this job.

What we said, though, is that Wednesdays right now is a lighter day legislatively. Right now, we only have the private Member's resolution. What we're proposing is that from 10 o'clock until 12:30 on Wednesdays we have a Legislative sitting. So there's nothing that would change right now as we know it from Monday to Thursday in the afternoons.

What it will be is a chance for us to convene the Legislature on Wednesday mornings to discuss legislation and everything else that we do. Normal Orders of the Day I'll call it, first readings, second readings in Committee, third readings and resolutions. It's extra time for us to work. It also fits into this family-friendly philosophy we've embraced, which is that it's during normal work hours anyway. Most of us are here in the building somewhere.

It's like anything, all of this will take time for us to adapt to because we've grown used to a certain pattern, but I think we'll get used to this and try it out. It's like anything, Mr. Speaker, we have that ability to try it and if it doesn't work we can fix it again. We can.

There's nothing here carved in stone that we can't fix and make for a better Legislature. I think it will allow for more productivity because as it stands, anybody that's interested in the minutia of this, come Wednesday it's hard to get any legislative work done. We only have three days where you can get a lot of legislative work done besides the Private Members' resolution Day. So I think this is a positive improvement.

One of the big issues here that we discussed after and this is an issue that the public has become aware of in the last five years – I think we've had three of them in this House – and that's the topic of extended sittings or filibusters. We went through one last spring. I can't even remember how many days it lasted. It feels like it lasted forever. We went through two in the last session.

I recognize – and I've had the luxury and the benefit of sitting on both sides of the House and experiencing filibusters from both angles – when you're in Opposition, it's an excellent, recognized, parliamentary tool; when you're in government, not so much. I joke when I say that. It has a different – but I recognize the value and I've had that. It's tough, but the session itself is tough on everybody involved, tough on the staff, tough on the people sitting in these chairs.

What we talked about is as it stands right now, Wednesday is the only day in which you, Mr. Speaker, as Chair you shut down the House at 5 o'clock at the end of business. What we're saying is we would move that every day the

Speaker will shut the House at 5:30 or 5 o'clock. Now as Government House Leader, I still have the ability under Standing Order 11 to give notice the day before that the House stay open, similar to what we do now. That ability is still there and that won't change.

What we're saying here is that we must give notice of that, and "Notwithstanding Standing Order 11(1), at midnight on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, unless the Closure Rule (SO 47) is in operation, the Speaker shall adjourn the House."

That is a substantial change to what we have done. That's one we had a lot of debate on in our meetings and it was good productive debate, but what we feel is that in this case we can still get the legislative agenda across, the Opposition still has tools because it doesn't take the bill – just say there's a particular bill that's contentious, it doesn't take it off the table. It just delays it.

In many ways there are pros and cons to all of this. Depending on what angle you look at it, you might like it or not like it. As I say, there are benefits and there detriments to each one but we feel it fits into the philosophy that we've employed as we came forward with this.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to sit down at this point. I will get a chance to speak to this again, but I have to conclude by thanking my colleagues on both sides, and caucuses as well, because this is something that has been discussed certainly in our caucus and the caucuses opposite. It's something we've had discussions on. So I thank everybody for their attention to it and I look forward to the debate that will ensue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise to speak to this motion today. I thank the Government House Leader for his comments. I think he did a very good job of summing up the work that's been done over the last number of months.

On behalf of our caucus, I was very pleased to be part of that work. It was a good committee, it was an effective committee, it was a functional committee. It was a committee that I believe did very good work.

I want to thank my hon. colleague from Conception Bay East – Bell Island for filling in for me a couple of times. The committee met a lot, and as a caucus of seven it's sometimes a challenge to be in all the places we're required to be at all times. So we worked together, and I appreciate the Members of the committee accommodating that as well.

I understand the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island wasn't too disruptive to the process. He didn't cause too many fusses and –

AN HON. MEMBER: I heard he did a better job.

MR. KENT: Well, yes, that's the kind of thing you would say, of course.

I don't have too much to say. I have a couple of these little Post-it Notes to sum up my comments. I do support much of what's in this report.

I want to begin by thanking government. On this of the House it sometimes feels a little weird to be doing that, but I think it's important to give credit where credit is due. I want to thank government and I want to commend government for driving this work forward because our Standing Orders have been out of date for some time.

For me, this feels much like the debate we were having yesterday and today on procurement. Previous administrations had done work, it's fair to acknowledge and recognize that. I was actually, at one point, a presiding officer in this House and did some work with Speaker Wiseman and Deputy Speaker Verge on revising Standing Orders, and with the Table Officers that Andrew – sorry, I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker. I'm distracted by my colleague. I have lost my train of thought. The Government House Leader acknowledged the efforts of our Table Officers. They were engaged in that work that had gone on with Speaker Wiseman, Deputy

Speaker Verge and myself in doing some background work on this.

What we didn't do was get to a point where the committee, with all parties represented, got to work as a standing committee of the Legislature to get this done. So I commend government for providing the leadership to get that done. I believe the result is positive. I actually believe the House will function better as a result. I believe we're modernizing our Standing Orders in a way that will lead to a more effective process in the House.

In some cases, we're just modernizing Standing Orders to reflect what's going on pretty well everywhere else. We're talking about a document that was written, I suppose, around the time of Confederation and even before that, in some cases. There have been parts of it that have been updated over time. Previous governments and previous sessions of the House have updated the Standing Orders over time. But what was required was a full review and that's a work in progress, as I think the Government House Leader explained well.

We chose to focus on certain sections of the Standing Orders and work on those, and we're going to see how it goes over the next year. Then over the next year – and I suspect our committee will meet again early in the new year – we'll pick some other sections of the Standing Orders that need to be modernized and revised.

I think it's good that we're all working together on that. I believe that all parties in this Legislature support democratic reform, and support reforming some of our practices in our democratic institutions like this one. So I think it's positive that we're on the same page and trying to make that happen.

I want to join the Government House Leader in thanking the staff of the House of Assembly that have supported this process. He mentioned that there was an official from the Department of Justice who was involved as well. We appreciate that contribution as well.

I believe this is a very good report. Nothing is etched in stone. It feels like the Standing Orders traditionally have been etched in stone because they haven't changed in totality in quite some

time, but we will put these new rules in place for a year and see how it goes. We have an opportunity to discuss changes and debate changes in this House.

In the interest of time I'll just very quickly highlight some of the things that are in the report. As I said, I think the Government House Leader provided a very good overview so I won't repeat what he said. I think modernizing the rules around quorum to reflect what goes on in other jurisdictions to be more consistent is a good thing. Modernizing just some of the language in the Standing Orders to reflect the 21st century is also a good thing.

I'm very pleased that we came to some consensus on a parliamentary calendar. Some predictability around when the House is actually going to sit makes good sense, especially considering if you look at history, it's pretty well sat around the same time, give or take several weeks, for a long time. Having some structure to that, I think, makes good sense for everybody. I think it actually poses more challenges for government than it does for Opposition because having sat at the Cabinet table for a brief period of time, there will be probably more pressure on the Cabinet to do its work to get legislation ready to come to the House of Assembly.

I think the structure will be good for everyone. It will require everybody to do business a little differently, but I think it's very consistent with what's going on in most other jurisdictions.

I really like the idea of the time during sittings for a constituency week. Now, in my case, I still value it. I often make the comment to people that it's hard to get any work done when the House of Assembly is open. Even though there's a common perception out there among people that MHAs are only working when we're sat together in here, those of us who have experienced this know that's not really the case. This is an important part of the democratic process, one that many of us look forward to, one that perhaps some don't look forward to.

There's a whole bunch of work that's required of MHAs and ministers that goes on outside of this Chamber. For me, I can be in my district in 20-25 minutes. But for some of my colleagues – colleagues on both sides of the House – their

districts are far away. They couldn't drive from one end of their district to the other in 20 minutes. In some cases it would take a half day to do so. In some cases, people have to travel by ferry and planes to get to parts of their district.

So to have a constituency week that allows people to go and do the rest of their work as an MHA, I think is a really good thing. For those of us that represent urban districts, it's perhaps less essential, but it will allow me, even in an urban area, to be a better MHA by being able to have more time, at certain periods of the year, to be in my district and to attend to the matters on behalf of my constituents, even when the House is in session.

I think all of that is really good. The only thing we differed on throughout that entire process – and I appreciate how the Government House Leader framed it and I'll try and do so in the same light. The only issue where we had any disagreement whatsoever is around the continuous filibusters and that ability for us to prolong debate in a continuous fashion.

To be clear, what's proposed here won't eliminate a filibuster, but it changes the dynamic and the timing of a filibuster. The changes that we're making will no longer allow for round-the-clock sittings of the House and there are pros and cons to that. I was pleased to hear the Government House Leader acknowledge that there is value, particularly if you're in Opposition – there is real value to being able to have a filibuster. But it's also important to recognize that even today under current rules, government decides whether a filibuster happens or not to the extent that government can adjourn debate at any point in time. So it's important to recognize that as well.

As an Opposition caucus we had a lot of discussion about this. We were very eager to try to come to consensus on every single point in this report. Unfortunately, the one point where we do respectfully disagree is on restricting our ability to have that continuous filibuster.

I'm going to take my seat in just a moment; I don't want to prolong the debate on the matter. The committee Members were very respectful. We had really good discussions about the issue. I think they respect my perspective. I respect

their perspective. There are good arguments on both sides. Issues related to cost – whether the House sits for more days or whether the House sits round the clock, there are cost implications. There's no consistency around what other jurisdictions do, although there are a lot of jurisdictions in the country that have eliminated the round-the-clock filibuster and then there are some we've discovered that haven't.

We've had lots of discussions in our caucus around engagement of citizens in the process and what does that really mean.

To conclude, there are times when there's a matter of such urgency or such importance that we feel it would be nice to be able to continue that debate, even if we have to go all night, if it's warranted. As the Government House Leader again fairly points out, there have been several instances of that, even in the last couple of sessions of the House of Assembly.

That is the only point we really disagree on. Otherwise, this is an excellent piece of work. I want to commend government for its leadership in making this happen. Even with our disagreement on that issue, I think the House is going to function better overall as a result of this work.

I wanted to be on record as raising our concerns. We'll have a chance to vote on this and make our concern known through a vote, but I don't want that to take away from the amazing work that's been done. I want the work to continue. I pledge to continue to work with my colleagues in the other two parties to continue to modernize how this Legislature works and how the Standing Orders function.

There are lots more I could say. I'm noticing the clock and I want to be respectful of my colleague, so I will take my seat. I want to thank government again. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of the process.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm delighted to stand today to speak to this resolution that we are dealing with, the motion from the Standing Orders Committee. I'm certainly not going to repeat everything that the minister said, but to commend him for the great job on going through the resolution and explaining it. I do want to echo him and the Member for Mount Pearl North, echo what they said with regard to the great experience we have had, and I certainly hope will continue to have on the Standing Orders Committee.

Even though, as the Member for Mount Pearl North noted, there's one point on which we all didn't agree. There was agreement to disagree and bring it to the House and have the vote and go through our process. There was never any animosity at all over any of the discussions. So I want to recognize that first. It's been an excellent experience on this Committee.

It was particularly good for me because I've been a Member of the Standing Orders Committee for 10 years almost. From 2007 to July of this year, we had two meetings of that Committee. So, finally, after all those years of an expectation of being able to sit and really look at our Standing Orders, I particularly want to commend the Minister of Justice because he was totally committed to this. And I'm glad that his leader and the caucus were with him, but he was a real driver and, like with anything, we are in a House where the government has the majority. On something like this, you needed the support of the government and the passion of the Minister of Justice.

So I thank him for that; I thank him for being a father with young children because I think that drove him as well. It really has been a good experience. I, too, won't through all the names but I want to thank the Table Officers and staff who worked with us and behind the scenes, of course. Because it's not the Committee, neither the Minister of Justice or anybody else on the Committee who did what's in the Orders of the Day that we're reading from; it was the staff who did all of that work and we thank the legal counsel, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for the great work that they've done, along with the staff behind them. As I said, it's been really good.

I stand behind everything that's being recommended here in this motion, everything including the likelihood of not having continuous overnight filibusters, and I'll speak to that in a minute. I really think having a calendar is going to be really helpful for people to plan their lives.

And I want to echo what the Minister of Justice said. On many occasions in our discussion what came onto the table wasn't just us and what was good for us, it was the recognition of all of the people behind the scenes who support us. And it wasn't just the need for the 40 Members of the House to have a calendar, or the 40 Members of the House not to be sitting in a continuous filibuster, but to be aware of the impact on staff. Anything that we do in here affects, I don't know how many people, but dozens and dozens and dozens of people are affected when we're here in this House – all invisible, except for those of us who actually sit in the Chamber.

I want to speak to the filibuster and my support for stopping continuous filibusters; one, it is more the practice across the country now not to have continuous filibusters. But in 10 years – and it's really less than 10 years in a sense; I was elected in 2006, won a by-election, and then in 2007 we had a general election. From then to now, I've sat through four filibusters. The very first one, my first experience, I was all by myself here in the House of Assembly. So I had that experience of being the only one doing the filibuster. I made it through with one researcher up in our office and me, and we made it through. We never had a filibuster before and here it was, and overnight, et cetera.

Then the next time I sat through two very long filibusters – we broke records – when we had a caucus of five. You got a bit more sleep, but it still was very, very difficult. The first one I sat through, I was a caregiver for my mother, I wasn't a person who sat with her all day long but I organized her caregivers. So when we had that filibuster without any notice, I had to get things in place for somebody to be in the house taking care of my mother. So while I didn't have children, I had that experience.

So I really do believe that it is important for us to not do the continuous filibusters. I don't think they're necessary. Nobody is watching us –

very, very few people are watching us at 1 in the morning if we're in here to filibuster. I remember that very first one. We came out of the Chamber as media –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – were arriving. They had no idea we'd been here all night, none whatsoever. So I'm not sure what we gained by doing it, and I will be voting for the whole package. In the interest time, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to leave it at that. I think we have enough explanation of what's here and we'll be delighted to support it.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I notice the hour of the day, but I think we're nearing a conclusion of the discussion on this, so with leave of my colleagues I would ask that the House remain open past 5:30 p.m. so we can conclude debate on this resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Do we have unanimous consent to stop the clock to allow debate?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

By leave, the clock will stop at 5:30 p.m.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take too long. I did have an opportunity to read the resolution and all of the items contained within it. I think they're all good changes. I have to be honest, as the Official Opposition said, I had a bit of a mixed view on the filibuster piece. I've sat through two, I believe, on the government side and certainly, in the most recent budget, I sat through a filibuster as well. If I'm not mistaken, that's three.

There's no doubt there are pros and cons to it. Obviously if you're on the Opposition side, you feel in your mind there's a pro to it; I don't know if there really is. You wear yourself out; you're up all night and everything, and it gets silly around 3 or 4 in the morning. I don't know how much value is actually in it at 3 or 4 in the morning, to be honest with you. But I do understand, I suppose, there is a little bit of a sense of satisfaction to some degree that you get to keep her going and maybe upset your colleagues across the way a little bit, or at least that's what you think in your mind perhaps.

Even with these changes here, it shuts down at 12 o'clock. All it's going to mean – if the intent is to keep a bill going for a period of time to filibuster, whether you keep on going 24 hours around the clock for three days or you shut down at 12 o'clock and that means you keep her going for six or seven days instead of three days, well then I suppose you are still achieving the same thing. You're still keeping it going. You're still making the point that you want to make on the particular bill or budget or whatever it is that you happen to be filibustering. So while I do have some mixed views on the filibuster, overall I support it.

All of the other changes here to make the House of Assembly more family friendly and so on, I think that's definitely a step in the right direction. There's no doubt about it. The constituency week piece I think is a valuable thing to do as well, particularly if you're in the rural areas. It's a lot easier for us in this area to be able to get to the district or attend functions and stuff like that or meetings; but there is no doubt, if you're from a rural area and you're here in town week after week, that it really makes it difficult for those Members, and I can appreciate that. So I think it's the right thing to do to allow that constituency week for those Members, for sure.

I will just conclude – and the annual calendar is another thing, knowing when we're going to be sitting in advance. Because, believe it or not, some people don't necessarily always realize it, that we do have lives and families and everything else that we have to plan around. It is not just the elected Members; it's the House of Assembly staff. It's the people in Hansard. It's

the Table Officers. It's the people who are in the Broadcast Centre and so on.

If we decide we're going to keep her going all night long and so on, it's not just impacting us; it's impacting them. I think it's important to be mindful of that. It's not just about us. There are other people being impacted. If we can do things that make it more reasonable and fair for the staff as well, I think that's a positive thing.

I would just say for the record, Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, while I think this is a great start, I think there are other things that we could be doing. I'm glad to hear the minister say – I think he said himself – this is just the beginning. There are a number of things in the Standing Orders – for the record, I did write the Standing Orders Committee a while ago and talked about making some changes that relates to camera coverage in the House of Assembly, allowing electronic petitions, which we currently don't allow. I can't see why we wouldn't be allowing those. Also, taking what I termed at least, taking the politics out of Members' statements. I think those are all very positive reforms as well. I'm hoping we will see those reforms happen also.

The final point I would just make, as the Member here on exile island, I guess, basically these meetings occurred and there was great co-operation obviously amongst the three parties. I'm glad to see that and that's a positive, but as now an Independent Member I would have no feedback, no input, nothing into any of these changes. If we want to truly be inclusive and make changes, I think we need to consider that as well. I'm not the first person to sit as an Independent Member, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, and as the Minister of Health and Business and so on would know as well.

I'm certainly hearing, whether it's right or not, whether it happens or not, whether they're successful or not, there are certainly a lot of people out there who are talking about a bunch of people talking about running as Independents next election. If that should happen and if they're successful, then you're going to have to deal with that at some point in the future anyway.

I think it's important that this issue be addressed as well and to make it inclusive for all Members

of the House of Assembly. We were all elected by the people. We certainly shouldn't be punished because you're sitting as an Independent. You should be part of the process, just like everybody else. Currently, that's not happening. It didn't happen here. I think if we're going to be making changes to Standing Orders and so on, then we need to be respectful of the fact that we do have Independent Members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll keep my comments brief, given the time today. As a Member of the Committee, I just wanted to say a few words as well. I was very impressed with the way the Committee co-operated and the way we achieved what we did.

This is a little bit of an unusual motion. It's about how we govern ourselves and how we conduct ourselves here in this House. The word Parliament comes from the French word, parler, to talk. It's a place where we talk. What we're doing here today is amending the rules that govern the way we talk, we interact and how we do our business here in the House.

It's a very important thing to do, to change the rules of the House. It's an important thing. It was done by an all-party committee and just to the point made by the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, of course it's done by the Committee but it is brought back to the House and people have an opportunity to have input at this stage, Mr. Speaker.

I don't want to repeat things that other people have said. I just want to say I think the work of the Committee has been positive so far. We've done a number of good things; we've made this a more family-friendly House. We've also allowed for a set schedule which allows us to do our constituency work better, so that's important as well.

I look forward to continuing the work of the Committee to look at things like legislative committees because I think that's a very important part of the work that we do here as well.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my comments.

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.

Just a couple of minutes, I want to express a couple of concerns I have. Let me applaud the Committee, the all-party committee from both sides of the House, on the great job they did on this. It's a great motion. There are some great things in it. To have a schedule and everything else that's there is fantastic, but there's one little piece to this that I personally really feel strong about, and that's the filibuster part of it.

Government has the opportunity any time at all to adjourn debate and it's up to government whether we sit down and adjourn debate. That can be done through whatever mechanisms government has to adjourn debate.

One thing I have to say about a filibuster, and I know we always talk about, how do we get Newfoundlanders and Labradorians engaged in the House of Assembly? Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't watch us, don't follow us, don't have any idea of what we're doing in here at all, but during filibusters it's amazing. It's absolutely amazing.

Every Member in this House of Assembly can tell you that last year during the filibuster they received emails, they received messages, they received so much information because they heard on the radio in the morning from VOXM or CBC they're still sat in there. They took them out – why are they sitting in there? What are they debating? And that's what they were doing.

I believe, and I really do believe this, Mr. Speaker, that changes were made. I believe the last filibuster we had, we sat here, we all went back and forth, it's long and it's hard; it's hard, there's no doubt about it. We had a very small group here, and the NDP, a very small group, but we went through it. We got up and we probably got a couple of hours sleep and came back at it. But do you know what it did? It engaged Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

MS. PERRY: And it changed the levy.

MR. K. PARSONS: It did, and it changed a few things that were done. Not only that, I look at the filibuster that was done from the party opposite, the last one, and they changed things. We had a committee and everything else that was put in place.

I believe in filibusters. I believe it gives us the opportunity – and I know it will be closed down at 12:30, but I don't believe the people will be engaged like they were when it's on the morning news that they're in there. People want to listen. They want to see what's on the go, and that's what this House needs. We're wondering why young people are not engaged in politics? These are things that will get them engaged, if they watch it and get engaged in it.

That's just my words. I believe in the filibuster. I believe it has great results.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, I won't take much time in conclusion.

I will just say that I thank my colleagues on both sides for speaking to this resolution. Certainly, the Member for Mount Pearl North did take the opportunity during our deliberations to bring forward these concerns and did a good job of bringing them forward. So it's not something that we're just hearing now. I appreciate it, and I appreciate the fact that it has to be registered on the record as well.

I think it has to be put on the record. The thing that struck me was that we are the only province in Canada that does this. I think there's a reason we've gone that route, not to mention – yes, I don't think you can put a price tag on democracy, but there's a significant price financially when it comes to doing this when you have these. So these were a couple of the guiding factors.

A good thing to note is that these Standing Orders can be revised at any time by any government. The fact is, I think as a moving and continually functioning Standing Orders Committee, we're going to try these and if they don't work, if they don't make the House better, then we have the ability to change.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, I acknowledge the concerns he's brought forward. I do look forward, along with my friends on the committee, to looking at some of these issues over the next number of sessions and hopefully bringing change.

On that note, I'll sit. I appreciate your commentary. I look forward to seeing the imposition of these changes upon the vote. I look forward to making more down the road in hopes of improving this great House that we're all fortunate to belong to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: On that note, I move that we adjourn the House, seconded by the Member for Burin – Grand Bank.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow, being Private Members' Day.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2 p.m.