



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

FIRST SESSION

Number 68

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Wednesday

15 March 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Admit strangers.

Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I would move that the House resolve itself into a Committee, seconded by the Minister of Education, to consider Order 2, Committee of Supply, a resolution and Bill 71 respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty – much to the chagrin of my colleagues on the other side.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to debate Interim Supply.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 considering the related resolution and Bill 1, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain

Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service

AN HON. MEMBER: Bill 71.

CHAIR: Bill 71, sorry.

Resolution

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2018, the sum of \$2,703,698,200.”

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I’m happy, as I have always been, on every single occasion I’ve had the opportunity to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people of my district and on behalf of the people of this province. And certainly happy to stand here today and speak to Bill 71, and to speak to Interim Supply, a bill that many people in the province I guess generally wouldn’t be aware of. It certainly wasn’t something I was aware of prior to being elected and coming in and having this debate. But during my four years in Opposition and during my first year in government, I’ve obviously learned more about this process.

Now, one of the things I want to talk about is that – and again –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: – there’s no doubt that there has been some significant conversation over this in the last day, and I look forward to the commentary from my colleague, the Third Party House Leader; I look forward to her comments on this important piece of legislation. I look forward to anything that the Third Party might have to say to this important bill today. Because I like to be here in this House and I like

to speak to legislation. And I hope that she will take the opportunity to speak to this legislation.

I know that the Independent Member, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands – do you know what? I know he will speak to this. To give him credit – and there are times I find it hard, but to give him credit he has spoken to most pieces of legislation in this House – aye, nay, whatever – depending on what side of the House he was on, either side, he's spoken to legislation. This is no different; this is an important piece.

So what we saw yesterday was a conversation on Interim Supply and how the Opposition doesn't feel that they want to talk to it. In fact, they haven't taken many opportunities to speak to it. Even though when they were in government they had plenty of opportunity and exercised that opportunity to speak in this House. I'll continue to exercise my opportunity to speak to it. This is a chance to speak to the budgetary process of this province.

Now, what many people don't realize is that the budgetary process under this province, in many ways, is controlled under the Standing Orders: a very old, historic number of sections where we talk about the budget process. You have to spend X number of hours debating this; there are different headings of expenditure that we speak to. These are all things that could be changed by a Standing Orders Committee.

What I will point out, that people should realize, is that the Members opposite, who sat in government for 12 years, had every opportunity to update, to modernize, to change how we do business in this House of Assembly. Madam Chair, they did nothing. They did nothing.

What I will say is that since we've taken over and I, as Government House Leader, have been on the Standing Orders Committee and we have representation from all sides – the House Leader of the Third Party is on it; the Deputy House Leader for the Official Opposition is on it; my colleague for St. George's – Humber is on it; the Deputy House Leader for government is on it. And we've had an opportunity, we've met on a number of occasions and we've brought change to this House, to the Standing Orders. Little things that wouldn't matter to the everyday

person, like quorum, the number of Members you need to sit here in the House.

We've had an opportunity to speak to how we conduct business in terms of filibusters – something that is substantive. We've had the opportunity – we're actually here right now, Madam Chair, on a Wednesday morning, talking about the House of Assembly, that hasn't been done. It's a way to change.

The next change that we are going to talk about is having a committee structure in this House. Something that we haven't seen in about 15 years in this House, something that fell out of vogue and that the people have talked about, we've talked about in this House, we talked about when we were in Opposition, the Third Party has talked about it. We're going to work on making that a reality again as well.

We can look at petitions; we can look at Members' statements. There are a number of things we can look at. But one thing we can also look at is the budget process. Now again, what I will state is that the Members opposite are complaining about having to stand up and speak in this House to the budget. Now, a couple of things I will note, that people should remember: (a) they did the opposite when they were here, big time. They spoke when they were over here, but don't want to speak over there. Why you won't take the opportunity to speak in this House, I have no idea.

Madam Chair, (b) they have had every opportunity if they didn't like the process, to change the process and they didn't do it; (c) they know they are in the House and they have an opportunity to stand and ask questions and engage in an actual meaningful debate, but they choose not to engage in that debate.

I've said this, if either one of the Members on the other side stood up and asked me a question about the Justice Department as it relates to budget, to practice, to procedure, to the issues that we face every day and certainly there are a number of issues within my department that I deal with on a daily basis, I'm happy to stand here and engage in a meaningful debate, and this is the forum to do it.

In many cases, it's hard to do it. Because the way the House is structured we have Question Period, which again is 30 minutes and it's a chance to stand up and ask questions, but that's just 30 minutes. When you're having a debate on any other bill – recently we talked about the *Health Professions Act*, we talked about the *Patient Safety Act*, those are not opportunities to speak to, say, the Justice Department, or Education.

If they have questions, they can't ask them during those debates because you have to be specific; you have to be relevant to those pieces of legislation. Those are good debates, but they are specific debates. When we talk about Interim Supply, when we talk about the budget, when we talk about anything that's called a money bill, this is an opportunity to stand up and actually engage, I think, in a very meaningful debate.

I would welcome that opportunity to have that, but right now that is not happening. We are not getting that. I'd be happy to stand here and speak, I'd be happy to stand here and answer questions and engage in that debate, but they are choosing not to do that.

So, Madam Chair, I look forward, as the Standing Orders Committee moves forward, to having these conversations, along with House staff who have been there and seen the evolution of this. I'm happy to have that conversation and to talk about, what are the things we can do to modernize this House of Assembly. What are the things we can do to make the debate more relevant, more meaningful? I'm happy to do that.

I'm also happy to stand here and speak to the budgetary process as a whole. Again, I've talked about how the – I think the best part, in my mind, when it comes to the budget debate is the Estimates section, which is an opportunity to stand here in the House – sorry, sit here in the House, and ask questions back and forth. It's not confined to just a Question Period, where sometimes there's a bit of theatrics to it. This is a chance to actually ask some questions on the expenditure funds. What did you spend last year? What are you budgeting this year? Is it higher or lower? Why is it higher or lower? What are the different things that you're doing?

Then move into general policy; we've had those debates. I'd love to have that. I think it's an excellent chance to talk about your department. I can actually do that right now. I can do that right now and have that. I'll be happy to answer any questions they have, but I guess what I'm saying, Madam Chair, is that if the Opposition doesn't ask those questions, it makes it very hard to answer them.

So I'm happy to stand here when we have this opportunity to speak – now, I hear the Members of the Third Party chuckling over there, chuckling. So I'm hoping they'll take an opportunity to stand up and ask some questions. I'd be happy to speak to – it's funny, because it was only a couple years ago I heard them talking, we're not going to heckle. Madam Chair, I'll put it on the record, it's funny how things change.

Thank you for this opportunity, I look forward to another chance.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's an honour to stand in the House of Assembly once again to debate Interim Supply. I'm not going to get into the whole debate over the politics around this because it has happened on both sides, there's no doubt about that.

The only thing I will say, though, is the only objection I would have with the process is that if we were just talking about a regular money bill, where you could stand up and talk about whatever you wanted, that's one thing. The issue here, though, that I think everybody on this side has, is that it's eating into the budgetary debate time. That's really our issue, is we would rather see the budget and have that extra time to debate the actual budget itself as opposed to just taking the time away from the budget and stand up and talk about whatever it is you want to talk about, which is really what you're going to see happening; we saw yesterday, we're going to see again.

There will no doubt be Members up talking about what a wonderful district they have. I went to this tea party and that tea party and I'm doing great work for my district. That has nothing to do with the actual budget. We think that time would be better spent debating the budget; but, with that said, I have two choices. I can either sit here and say nothing and watch the government Members get up one after another and use up all the time this morning, because it's going to happen, or I can take advantage of some of that time myself to at least raise what I consider to be some important issues.

I have a couple that I want to just put on the record at least. I'm not saying if anything is going to change, but they are issues and I think they need to be put out there.

The first one I want to talk – and these are health care related. The first one I want to talk to, and this is a story that's been circulating now on social media for a while. I think it was in the news as well. It relates to a couple, a husband and wife, they were – let me see. The gentleman is 90 years old; his wife will be 87 years old in May. The wife now is in Clarke's Beach. Both of them were in Clarke's Beach because they were Level 2 in a Level 2 facility. The husband took ill, and as a result of that he's considered a Level 3 and he ended up getting moved to Saint Luke's in a Level 3 facility.

Now, obviously, he needed to go there because he needed the care, but the issue we have is that here he is now having to leave Clarke's Beach and go to Saint Luke's Home, a 90-year-old man, while his 87-year-old wife, his partner for the last 50-odd, 60-odd years, whatever it is, is left in Clarke's Beach. She can't move with him because she's only considered a Level 2, and she can't go to a Level 3 facility.

Now, there was a time – certainly I know at Saint Luke's, there was a time before it was taken over by Eastern Health, when it was run by the Anglican Church and so on, where basically if you went to Saint Luke's and you stayed in the cottages, at Bishop Meaden Manor and so on, when you got to a point that you could no longer stay in those cottages, that you would automatically go into the home that's there. That way, it was called – at the time they called it, it was under a former administration in

their earlier days, I think the concept was called aging in place. That was the concept they were going for.

In other words, as a senior you could go to a facility, you could start off perhaps in a cottage. Then when you couldn't stay in the cottage anymore perhaps you could go into an apartment, and then you would go into the home. Now, of course, we got this first available bed policy, and of course they're not allowing Level 2s into a Level 3 facility.

From a dollars and cents perspective, I understand why that is, because they're saying if we got a Level 3 facility and we've got doctors and RNs or whatever on staff, it's much more costly. So the cost per bed, we can't tie up a Level 3 bed and the cost associated with a person who's only a Level 2, because it's much more expensive. I understand the dollars and cents, but surely God, from a compassionate point of view, somewhere along the way compassion has to play a role in this.

In this particular case, here we have a couple, as I said he's 90, she's going to be 87 in May, been together practically their whole lives and now they're separated, Clarke's Beach and St. John's. There's something terribly wrong with that picture. He'll probably die of a broken heart before she does. The stress it's having on that individual – both individuals, not just one, both of them – and the stress on the family, it's just absolutely terrible, it's absolutely appalling.

I appeal to all Members of the House of Assembly; we need to find a better way of taking care of our seniors. I'm not pinning it on this administration. They've only been there a year or so. This didn't just happen overnight. This is something Eastern Health has been doing now for the last two or three, or three or four years, whatever it is, when they changed the policy. I'm not blaming anybody, but I'm just saying to all Members of the House that this is a real situation, real people. This could be my grandmother or grandfather tomorrow. It could be yours. It could be your parents, or God willing, if we live long enough, it could be you or I.

Just imagine now, you're married, with your spouse you've raised a family, you've got

grandkids or whatever, the love of your life, your soulmate, your partner, and after all those years you get separated like that. Not even being able to see your husband or your wife or whatever.

I remember when my mom passed, and my dad was never the same – never. For 10 years he lived after she had passed and he was never the same. I can remember at my dad's wake, a gentleman came in – I didn't know who he was – and he came up to me, he was the caretaker. I didn't know, but he told me he was the caretaker at the Salvation Army graveyard where my mom was buried – they're both buried now – and he came in because he said I knew something had happened to your dad. I said: What do you mean? He said: I knew something had happened because for the last 10 years, I could look at my watch, I could look at the day and your dad was there every single day for 10 years that your mom passed, he was there, sat there in his lawn chair every single morning basically the same time every day, for 10 years.

That's just an example of the connection that people have because she was his life. She was his life and when she died, part of him did. And that was a comfort he had, was to be able to at least be close to her. Now imagine when you're alive; imagine when you have that situation of a couple, been together their whole life, and they're alive. Now you're going to say to an 87-year-old woman and a 90-year-old man, we're going to separate you. You're going to stay in Clarke's Beach and you're going to go to St. John's.

There is something terribly wrong, Madam Chair – something terribly wrong with that system. I don't care, money be damned – I apologize if that's unparliamentary word, but anyway, you get my point. Somewhere along the way, in this equation, it cannot be simply about dollars and cents. It cannot be. We're talking about human lives. This is not widgets; this is people. This is human beings and I urge the government, I urge the Minister of Health and Community Services – and I know he knows what I'm saying is right here, and I know that he would want to do the right thing; I know everybody would.

It's not going to happen overnight; I understand that. But we really need to look at a better model. I think this whole model, like I said, they had years ago, or at least that was what they were moving towards, this aging in place model, is something we really need to look at having. So that for example, if you decided you were going to go to – again I'll just use St. Luke's as an example. At St. Luke's now you have cottages, you've got Bishop Meaden Manor, you've got cottages and then you've got the home, which is Level 3. You need something in between. You need something in between.

You need like an assisted living facility also at that same location, so that you can go from one stage to the next to the next, but you get to stay at the same place for your entire time, where you have familiar surroundings, you know the staff, you have friends, you're close to family, and you get to live and, eventually, pass away in dignity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks, Madam Chair.

It's an honour for me to stand, another year, and speak to the Interim Supply bill, Bill 71, and I'll talk a little bit about this bill and what it means and what the implications are. This bill is compelling government basically to borrow about \$2.7 billion dollars. I'll speak for a minute about why it is government is borrowing as much as it has to these days, but I just want to comment on the events here in the House of Assembly yesterday.

I was fairly surprised that the Opposition Members, the PC Opposition and the NDP Opposition, stood here and tried to shut down the debate yesterday on the Interim Supply bill, considering that we had only had 4½ hours, or fewer than five hours' worth of debate on the Interim Supply bill when both the Opposition Parties tried to silence the government on speaking about this bill.

It was especially curious considering, last year, the PC Party chose to spend 19 hours, I think it was, debating this bill, and I never heard a single

complaint. Some of the same people are sitting over in those seats right now in Opposition. I never heard a single complaint from them about having that length of time to discuss an important bill that involves borrowing \$2.7 billion dollars. It really gives you a sense of the PC Party's appreciation for the gravity of borrowing that massive sum of money that they just want to, after 4½ hours, vote on it and whatever, and just move on.

That really, I think, gives people an indication of one of the reasons why we're in the fiscal crisis, mess, situation that we're in today; because that party really has no interest in having any sort of debate, just borrow, borrow, borrow, borrow and don't talk about it. So I thought that was very interesting.

The Deputy House Leader, the Member for Mount Pearl North got up and he basically implied – and he can stand up and correct me if I'm wrong – that that was because every year the Opposition would drag out the debate. Well, the PC government had a majority over here if they wanted to not have any further debate, whenever they wanted to not have any further debate – it looks to me from the numbers from the 12 years that they were in government, every time they got close to 20 hours, they just shut it down. So we never shut it down as Opposition one time. I'm just surprised to see the NDP cheerleading for this, but there is nothing that really surprises me these days in any case.

This is a good opportunity for Members of government to talk about the state we're in, why we're in the mess we're in and comment on some of the things that we hear, the absurd things we hear coming from the Opposition on a daily basis. I have a lengthy list of this, and I hope that I get a few hours in this debate to discuss this.

We have to remember that the PC Party was elected on a promise of no more giveaways. Everybody will remember no more giveaways, in that somehow everybody previous to them taking government were giving things away. Which I find is all very interesting now that the full truth is becoming known about Muskrat Falls and what that government did to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and future generations of Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians who will now have to shoulder the cost of one of the worst deals, one of the worst giveaways that we have seen in the history of this province and I would say going back to whenever it was John Cabot landed on the shore out in Bonavista, I don't think there's been a worse thing, a worse deal by a governing authority on this Island in this province in our whole history.

That was a project – there was no Public Utilities Board approval. They couldn't make a decision because the government would not provide them with the parameters that they needed to properly examine Muskrat Falls as a power option. It was rammed through this House of Assembly, those of us who were here – I look at the Member for Torngat Mountains, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, Members who were here in the House of Assembly who were here for that debate, we were told we basically weren't going to get Christmas holidays that year if we didn't just see to the government and just let them get the bill and ram it through the House of Assembly.

As the Premier said the other day, and I think people have to remember this – because I looked at oil this week and oil continues this week to be trending downwards closer to \$50 a barrel. This was a project that was sold to us. I remember the minister of Natural Resources was sitting right here, Jerome Kennedy, telling the Opposition that oil was going to stay above \$100 a barrel for the next 55 years. And here we are, just a couple of years later, and it's getting down close to 50 bucks – cut in half.

So the people of the province were absolutely misled. We knew, we could tell, we asked questions and those were times when the NDP used to ask questions about Muskrat Falls as well, but now they're happy to just let it all go right by and tie their little orange wagon to the PC Party on Muskrat Falls, which I find shocking.

We were told then that Muskrat Falls was the least-cost option. They kept saying it over and over again. Every one of them, the Members who are there sitting there – I won't name them; they know who they are – they would stand up and they would say it's the least-cost option.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: And I remember saying what about liquefied natural gas. What about all that natural gas that's being basically pumped back into the seabed out there now? Because that's what they're doing. At Hibernia, at White Rose, they're pumping natural gas back into the seabed. Basically, it's not being used and that renders that resource to a third of it unusable in the future when you do that with it instead of bringing natural gas – and I remember, I went to Dr. Stephen Bruneau, I think, was a professor, I went to a lecture down to the university one night and he talked about how we could have job creation, open up a new industry, there would be taxation, that we could harness natural gas for the generation of power in Newfoundland and Labrador. And that was just completely disregarded.

Jerome Kennedy would stand up here in this seat and tell us that was the least-cost option because oil was going to stay above \$100 for the next 55 years. Sure, no one in their right mind would believe that. And, of course, here we are just a couple of years later saying, of course, what everybody knew – and people knew that they were just being sold a bill on goods on Muskrat Falls; people knew. But it's sad now because what we're looking at is the potential of what we said in Opposition at the time: of rates doubling.

I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, I know he's very well intentioned, he got up that time, he talked about the plight of senior citizens in the province, how are people on fixed incomes – and there are lots of people who don't have fancy pensions from the House of Assembly out there. How are those people who don't have some sort of a pension in addition to their OAS, how are they going to afford to pay double the power bill? That's absurd. Not everybody can sit around their propane fireplace and keep warm, right? Not everybody has that luxury. Not everybody can redo their home and insulate it and make it better for keeping the heat in. And I'm sure most senior citizens in this province cannot afford to pay double the power bill. That's just one thing that this PC government did to people in this province.

It's no wonder, Madam Chair, it's no wonder that they stood up there yesterday and tried to silence us, to prevent anybody from standing up over there to say what has gone on in the past couple of years. If we get 20 hours of debate on the Interim Supply bill, the same as the PC government did on average for about 12 years in government, I'm going to stand up here every chance I get and remind the people of the province why we're in the filthy mess we're in.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: (Inaudible), Madam Chair, if I may ask I am going to leave of this House to give the hon. Member another five minutes (inaudible) unanimous consent could be offered.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A few days ago, I stood in this House and talked about Interim Supply, Bill 71. I'm pleased to have the opportunity again this morning, Madam Chair, to stand up and continue on some of the points I was trying to make last week. For those watching, listening at home, Interim Supply is all about the need for us to borrow some money so that we can basically keep paying bills until we discuss the budget. We go through Estimates, as has already been referenced in this House this morning, and I've got to say going through Estimates last year for the first time as a new MHA was an interesting experience.

To have Members opposite, to sit with departments, to go through line by line and pose questions, to seek clarification, the learning for me and the irony of it is that we get Members opposite who then come into this hon. House after they go through Estimate, and they try to make political grandstanding and talk about the things that we're trying to do as a government to

rectify the mess that we were handed when we formed government in 2015.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about that there was a \$1.1 billion deficit. We know from the audited financial statements, it was actually \$2.2 billion. So we get criticized many times in this House about going back on commitments. Well, when you're down an extra billion dollars, it takes some significant changes in order to catch that up.

I have to tell you, Madam Chair, one of the comments that were made in this House, and I take great exception to it, is the Member for Cape St. Francis stood in this House and said that we, as government Members, were afraid to go in our districts. Now, I can tell you, I am not afraid to go in my district. I have spent many, many hours – I'm rarely home actually, if you talk to my family. I spend many, many hours going throughout my district talking to people, talking about the issues, understanding the impacts of the budget that came down last year. We knew it was a hard budget. We knew it was going to be difficult on families and individuals, but we were left with a major mess in this province.

So for the Member for Cape St. Francis to saying that I, along with my colleagues, were afraid to go in our districts, Madam Chair, right after the budget came down, I was in Clarendville. I went to a large skating event at the Eastlink Events Centre and there were friends of mine, friends who I've known for 20 years, during the intermission said to me: You got some nerve to be here tonight. I said: Why is that? With the budget you people brought down. I said: I don't shy away from anything. I have some understanding of the impact, but I want to hear from you so that I can bring that back to my colleagues and this hon. House.

So when the Member for Cape St. Francis says that we're afraid, definitely not – not afraid whatsoever. I look forward to, I welcome every opportunity to go out and talk to constituents of my district. Just before this hon. House started the winter-spring session, I met with seniors in my community. There were lots of references to: Well, Alberta has been able to do things differently than us. I quickly said to that senior couple: You can't compare what's going on here

in Newfoundland and Labrador with what's happening in Alberta. Number one, we don't have the population base. Number two, they were budgeting last year a \$10 billion deficit on the year. I think their accrued deficit by 2019 will be \$58 billion.

As a province, and if we didn't make some significant changes because of the mess that we were left, we would have upwards of \$22 billion as an accrued deficit in this province. I can tell you, Madam Chair, that if that day came, we could not come back from that. So this government had to make some difficult choices; some choices because of the mess that was left for us.

Now, we've made some significant investments in this entire province. Last week I talked about – or the last time I stood, Madam Chair, I talked about the issues impacting a school in my community, which is Riverside Elementary. Yes, we had to make some tough choices where there were some projects that had to be deferred, the planned extension on Riverside Elementary when the project was deferred at 1.6 per cent of the design work done.

Now, I can tell you, Madam Chair, as the MHA I've been active. I've engaged with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to try to find a solution, a number of solutions. So we've been meeting with the school community, we've been meeting with the parents, we've been meeting with the English School Board and we have some solutions that can help rectify the problem of some overcrowding that we have in the larger spaces, like the cafeteria and the gymnasium. We've had to come up with alternative solutions because of the mess we were left.

I'll tell you another thing that's gone on in my district, Madam Chair. People have asked me, why has the province been in such a mess? I said well, as the 2015 election was unfolding, of course there were announcements being made everywhere. In my district, in my home community of Port Blandford, the Leader of the Opposition showed up with the former MHA and they announced \$100,000 for the design work on a new fire hall and a town hall.

Now, it's great to make promises. We get lambasted in this House about we make promises, promises, promises. We have no plan, they say. Well, I can tell you, in that example of a fire hall, a new fire hall and a town hall for Port Blandford, it's great to go out and say: vote for us, we'll give you \$100,000 and you'll get a new fire hall. I can tell you, Madam Chair, nothing happened with that commitment, not one thing. Not one thing, it did not move.

I met with the town council of Port Blandford on a couple of times and it came to the point that they were tired. The town council was tired of trying to find how much this project has moved forward, because it had not moved anywhere. Yes, it's great to go out and say we'll give this to you, but they did nothing with it, Madam Chair, not one thing. Zero did they do with it.

I can say that through the help of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, I approached him and, you know what, today that design work is moving forward. The Members opposite talk about that we have no plan, they don't follow through. That's what we consistently see, they don't follow through, but I can tell you, Madam Chair, this government does.

We made commitments. If we see any problems, if problems come to us, we address those problems. We find the solutions to help the communities in this entire province. Madam Chair, it has not been easy to fix all those things. Some things will take time.

I have less than a couple of minutes before I have to take my seat, but I'll also talk about the Terra Nova trestle. The Leader of the Opposition was in the community of Terra Nova and they decided to put a new top on the trestle. As soon as the top was put on the trestle, all of a sudden realized, it was not structurally sound. So it had to be closed down.

We've taken a lot of heat; I've taken a lot of heat. I've been to demonstrations in the community. People have been very upset and said, why can't we go across the trestle? Well, an engineer went and did a study and said it was unsafe, but I can tell you, Madam Chair, we have found the money to fix the problem.

In my mind, putting a new top on before they did an assessment was a waste of money. Again, it was another election ploy to try to get re-elected and another mess that have come to us, to me as an MHA, to try to find a solution. I can tell you, Madam Chair, the last update I have is that 85 or 90 per cent of that work has been done. The trestle will soon be open. We have to get engineers in to reassess it again, but it will connect the T' Railway Park again so that people who like to snowmobile and get on ATVs and enjoy the outdoors will be able to go across that bridge again.

Those are a couple of examples, Madam Chair, of the mess we've been left, and we've had to find innovative solutions to address some of those concerns that have come our way and have been left to us as a government.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It is an honour to stand on my second occasion to speak to the Interim Supply bill. Contrary to my last remarks when I spoke a few days ago, what I thought I'd do today is talk a little bit about that new wonderful department called Service NL that I'm now minister for.

I've been on the job for, I guess I'm coming on to week four, and as I was speaking to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, this morning, I am responsible for a lot of things but not everything, as per a particular news item this morning, and I'll leave it at that.

It's interesting, when you're speaking about Interim Supply, what you're trying to do, of course, is to ensure that government continues to function, and Service NL, as people like to describe it, it is the face of government. There are so many things we do in that department. It is a fascinating myriad from A to Z, essentially.

So what I thought I'd do is just talk about some of the high-level issues. I'm going to take my first five minutes to do that, and then I want to go to that great District of Lake Melville and talk a little bit about all the good things going on up there, because I like to be positive even when others like to try to pull you back into that cage.

First of all, Service NL; some of the interesting issues that are on the go right now and some of the things we do, I just thought I'd throw out a few numbers. We do over 6,000 food premises inspections. There are something like 2,000 inspections and certificate issuances just for onsite service systems. These are huge numbers in the volume.

I had a number here; for example, 20,000 samples of municipal water supplies where we're actually making sure that water quality is safe to drink and people's health is protected. There are something like some 12,000 inspections of technical services, everything from elevators to boiler and pressure vessels, to fire and life safety inspections. So it's an extremely busy group, and as I find as I walk around the department and get to know the different people, it's amazing how different each person's job is in there. So I commend them. I'm looking forward to getting to know them as much as possible.

Here's another interesting one that's very directly related to the construction and building trades industry, and that is the department does some 14,000 electrical inspections. So before you're approved and certified to proceed, the money that we are talking about here today needs to go to those staff to do those inspections so that, frankly, our society can carry on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. TRIMPER: I could use a bullhorn, maybe. Maybe that might help.

So it's a busy department, and some of the busy topical issues, just to give some fodder to my colleagues in the Opposition, because I'm always looking for questions. I sit here

sometimes a little bored, but give us some issues that are certainly quite topical these days, things like school bus inspections, our need and our move to go to a digital by design. Certainly, building accessibility is a very important topic and I'm heavily involved in that in understanding what needs to be done and hearing from the various organizations that are concerned.

Pensions plans are very, very important right now; what's going on around some of our industrial-dependent communities right now and unfortunate situations around pension plans and the complex world of actuaries and understanding how a pension plan works and some of the shortcomings that have occurred unfortunately for many folks who have come to rely on those pensions and the challenge in sorting that through. My colleague for Labrador West mentioned just a few days ago some of the steps that the government is taking to support and help those people.

Occupational disease is another one that's very topical for my colleague for Labrador West and other folks who happen to be MHAs representing districts where, for example, there's been mining activity and we're now concerned about the health of people who've worked on the site.

Certainly, a very topical one as well is the auto insurance system. Taxi drivers and operators are very concerned. I'm very pleased to say I've been reaching out to those people in the last few days as they are facing some very tough financial burden. We're going to be meeting with them as early as tomorrow. So I look forward to doing that and talking to them.

Another topical item just from my colleagues for Labrador are two of the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 17 and I think – I better not quote the numbers, but there were two in particular where government has been asked to help. I've very pleased to say that on behalf of our department and our government, we will be there to help those people who suffered greatly under that strategy, I guess I'll call it that, of integrating Aboriginal communities with Western society and the terrible consequences of that.

So that's a little bit on Service NL. I look forward to speaking extensively about that as I go forward, but I also wanted to take about half my time to talk about the great District of Lake Melville. As a colleague of mine says right now, he says it's the place where we get 10 months of winter and two months of bad skidooring. Skidooring is very much a big theme of how we get around. I'm pleased to say winter is still very solid in Labrador and we're taking full advantage of it.

Some of the activities that have been happening lately, and again relating it to finances and the availability of cash to help people where they need it, for example, the community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay right now, the previous administration – I have to give them some credit – had set up a relationship with that town recognizing the consequences that they were feeling as a municipality adjacent to a multi-billion dollar infrastructure project in the Muskrat Falls Project.

They had allocated some quarter million dollars a year and a special assistance grant to give them additional capacity to deal with those issues. I'm very pleased to say that we've just sent them a cheque for last year's amount, and I understand that the forwarding amount is also in process for this coming year of another quarter million to help the mayor, his council and that municipality deal with the pressures that they're feeling on their infrastructure.

Speaking of mayors, I also want to give a good kudo to the newly minted mayor of Northwest River, Derek Montague. Many of us heard, and you can only imagine – we certainly felt some issues with the weekend winds and the loss of power outage. Well, the community of Northwest River suffered for close to two weeks with serious water supply issues. The mayor, who is new to the office, needed a great deal of assistance and the former minister of Service NL, under him and his team, together with my former department and others, frankly, coordinated a response to assist him, both with staff on the ground but, as I wanted to draw in this discussion, financial assistance to help them with a particular situation that they found themselves in.

Not only were they dealing with water supplies, but there was also some outstanding challenges around submitting their past accounts and their audited statements as to how they are operating as a municipality. So thanks to the co-operation and thanks to municipal leaders who stepped up. We're more than pleased to co-operate with them and help them out.

Some other important things that are going on in Lake Melville, and I'm pleased to say that my recent colleagues were up helping me make some of these announcements, and that was some \$500,000, a half a million dollars, for four projects, and that included upgrades to the Kinsmen Park with what is known as a concrete splash pad. It provides a nice recreational escape in the summertime because we do get some high temperatures there. So this is something the town, the communities, were looking for, for some time.

Another important organization, and we speak about them often – I often myself don't know how to help people who are frankly greatest in need of help and assistance but when I think about an organization like the Salvation Army and Captain Brent Haas and his wife Melissa and the role that they play in their community – and I see you nodding your head, Madam Chair, because you are aware, as are all my colleagues for Labrador, the role that the Salvation Army plays, and the funding that we were just able to provide to them to help them with an expanded kitchen. I get to work in that kitchen a few times a year helping to serve meals. I still wonder why they get me to wear a head net because I don't think I have a lot of hair to keep out of my eyes, but I wear one anyway, all in the spirit of it, but most important thing –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. TRIMPER: Yeah, maybe it's a chin net.

But we do go there and the community does get involved in helping them serve meals to folks who really are down on their luck. Tip of the hat, Brent, to you and your team for all that you do.

Another very important organization that has shown a lot of leadership and is getting a lot of things done is President Tony Chubbs of the

Labrador Hunting and Fishing Association. Numerous different projects, they're now working on a marina. I've met with them several times and looking forward to seeing them make progress. We just provided to them \$29,000 for their hunting and shooting range expansion.

Then another group of volunteers who've been on the go for decades is the Birch Brook Nordic Ski Club and the support that we've been able to help them recently.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TRIMPER: I look forward to speaking again, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to stand a few minutes. I heard a few comments in the House of Assembly the last week or so and I just want to stand and clarify some of the comments that were made. There has been an issue that has been very dear to my heart the last six or seven years and that is the acute care hospital in Corner Brook. People know in the House of Assembly and across the province that I fought very hard for that with our leader, the Premier of the province, and I know with the Member for Corner Brook and I know with the help from the Minister of Health and the Minister of Transportation and Works, we brought this to a very satisfying announcement in Corner Brook.

Madam Chair, I heard a comment yesterday from the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi: Let's not go in the past. She was asking questions last week about the hospital and acute care; let's not go in the past. Do you know why she doesn't want to go in the past? And I don't mean to be picking on that Member but I can tell

you something that disturbed me when I hear her asking questions about the hospital in Corner Brook. She has yet to make a positive statement about the hospital in Corner Brook. She has yet to support the hospital in Corner Brook. She has yet to support the seniors in Corner Brook.

When we were working on the deal with the mill in Corner Brook, Madam Chair, I was in Opposition. I worked with, at the time, Jerome Kennedy who asked me to help out and I did help out. I remember the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi stood up in the House of Assembly and started asking questions on behalf of the union. I came over and spoke to Jerome Kennedy at the time and I said: What's going on? Jerome said: I don't know. And I said: I don't know. Do you know what I did, Madam Chair? I went out and I phoned the four union people. I said: Who's speaking for that Member? Do you know what they said? No one.

She got in her seat, tried to ruin a \$110 million deal for the people of Corner Brook, and never spoke to the union once. Never spoke to the union members once. I can tell you why I'm bringing that up and she doesn't want to go back to the past, I know, I know, bringing up the long-term care hospital in Corner Brook because Wayne Lucas has got concerns.

I'll ask the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, here – you're so concerned about the seniors in Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland, I ask you a question. The former Canadian Tire building on Herald Avenue, who does all the blood testing, who goes in and does a lot of the work for the hospital in Corner Brook, let me ask you a question: Has anybody asked who clears the roof? Does anybody care who clears that roof? It's the same deal with the long-term care.

As long as you've got competent public sector workers inside that building working, there hasn't been a question yet about renting that building. It's a private building, operated by a private owner, but inside workers are public sector workers, as we committed to.

I remember Wayne Lucas – and I don't mean to be picking on him, but I am. I remember when we were out on the steps and we were in Opposition and they were talking about private

partnership. They wanted to know about the Opposition. I walked out on the steps in the union rally. Four, five hundred people – I walked out. I walked up to the microphone and I said I'll guarantee you now that public sector workers will be inside that building. I guaranteed it on behalf of the Opposition. When the Premier made his announcement, he guaranteed it.

Do you know what Wayne Lucas did? He walked up to me, shook my hand and said: Eddie, b'y, there's no misunderstanding where you come from on that. I said: Thank you very much. When I was out in Corner Brook then, he wouldn't shake my hand now. Oh, I can't shake your hand; you got rocks in your head. I'll tell Wayne Lucas now and I'll tell the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, I may have rocks in my head, but my number one concern is the people of Corner Brook, the seniors of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I hear when the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi stands up and asks questions about private partnership – why don't you get the details? I ask the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi and I ask Wayne Lucas: When was the last time you had a senior ask you why have I got to leave? When's the last time? If it happened to you, stand up right here now. The Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi is in her seat, Madam Chair.

If you took a senior's hand, or when you visit seniors from Corner Brook who's out in Stephenville Crossing, which I have done, saying when am I coming back to Corner Brook, if that happened to you, stand up. Stand up and say. I went and said I'll work as hard as I can to get the long-term care facility in Corner Brook. Here's your opportunity. Madam Chair, she won't stand up because it hasn't happened. Or when you've got to send seniors out – there are seniors right now being taken from their family, and we're trying to put a stop to that.

And I hear the questions coming – do you know what Wayne Lucas said at the rally in Corner Brook? Get this now, it's on tape by the way, anybody in the province – do you know what Wayne Lucas said at the rally? I should have a

veto on this long-term care and the hospital in Corner Brook. I should have a veto. So okay, Wayne Lucas – and I know the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi is doing his bidding for him here in the House. What are you going to do with the seniors if you got a veto and you don't like it, you don't like who's shovelling off the roof, you don't like it?

So what are you going to do with the seniors? What are you going to do with the hospital in Corner Brook that was built? Public sector workers, we will work on the radiation. The people who've got to drive in now from Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland because there's no radiation in Corner Brook, aren't you concerned about them, I ask the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi? Did you meet with the hospital group? Did you meet with the city councillor who's pleased? Did you meet with the action committee who are very pleased? Did you meet with concerned citizens who are very pleased? Did you meet the chair of the Western Health Regional Board who's very pleased?

Who is against this? I would love to know who's against this because it disturbs me when you worked so hard – and I know the Opposition is over there now, they made at least seven promises the hospital's going to be built since 2007. And that's in the past; we can't talk about the past. But please, please, when we find a way to keep seniors home with their families, when we find a way that people who are going through a tough time through cancer, we find a way to keep them in Corner Brook, to have their radiation treatment, when we find a way to attract more specialists to Corner Brook and to Newfoundland and Labrador, let's work together on this.

I don't care who shovels off the roof, but what I do care is that they'll get top-notch quality by public sector workers. This is not what the Opposition had planned. The Opposition had planned – and if anybody wanted to see them, I can get that documentation. They had to take a seniors' home, take a part of the seniors' lot, move it over here, get a private company from BC to move in with your own private workers. That was the plan they had. I know there was Sandy Collins out saying oh, they just passed the deal that we approved. It's absolutely false.

Sandy Collins, you're making these false statements again on behalf of the Opposition.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: You can laugh over there, but I can tell you one thing, the Member for CBS, you can stand over there laughing, you can laugh as much as you like, because you want to pick up for your buddy, but I can tell you, you, your Leader of the Opposition, or anybody over there, Sandy Collins also was in the government Members when you guys didn't fulfill the commitments to the City of Corner Brook, Western Newfoundland for the seniors and the people.

So don't stand on your little Twitter box and say what we're doing is wrong, because I can tell you, if any of you got the courage or the guts, let's go out and meet some of those seniors who now in the next couple of years won't have to be moved away from their loved ones. Let's move out, let's go out and see them. Let's go out and meet with the health care action committee to see if they're pleased. So don't go using seniors – if there's something done right, let's work together.

I can tell the Member from CBS is over there smiling and laughing now, if you had the courage, you would stand up also. I can tell you if someone on our staff was making such false, erroneous, misleading statements like Sandy Collins has made about the hospital in Corner Brook with the long-term care, he wouldn't be in our office. But you can't do that though, because the Leader of the Opposition was the one who made the promises over there with the hospital. I'd love to know how many times he flew out to Corner Brook to make those statements.

So what I'm saying here, and I've only got a minute left, and I say to the Member of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, go out and meet some seniors. Go out and sit down with some seniors. Go out and meet with the action committee, see what – you know, I'll say to the Leader of the Opposition: Do you know who most of the action committee is? The ones you never called about the deal for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. They're the ones on the action committee. Do you know who most of them are? They're union members at the mill. They're your brothers and

sisters. They're your brothers and sisters out there.

It's such a good news announcement and to stand in this House of Assembly and give them some kind of impression that all of a sudden we're just going to put people in there unqualified to do the work at the hospital, unqualified to do the work at the long-term care facility, when it's just not true – it's just not true. There comes a time when you have to break ranks. I feel that one of the times that you should break ranks is when it comes for the seniors of province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I worked hard with this previous government, and this is where I've got to give Tom Marshall credit. It took a while, but when Tom Marshall did that hospital study for radiation when he was premier of the province, it caused a lot of stir. I have to give him credit because he stood up and said the information I'm getting is not correct and because of that study that Tom Marshall did, there will be radiation in Corner Brook so people don't have to travel, and also there will be room for a PET scanner in Corner Brook. That's where I give Tom Marshall credit for finally breaking ranks with his own department, his own government and saying we need to do a proper study.

Thank you, Madam Chair; I'll be back again to have another few words.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll take advantage of the time and bring up a couple more issues. The next issue I just want to raise, Madam Chair, is the issue of paid family caregivers. So it's another health issue. That was a program that was brought in I guess by the previous administration maybe four or five years ago. I believe it was Minister Sullivan was the minister of Health at the time, if memory serves me. I thought it was a good program, and I still think it's a good program, because certainly there are lots of situations where you don't have the availability in a lot of cases in certain parts of the province of home care agencies and so on

to take care of our seniors and persons with disabilities and so on who require the care. So when this program was announced to allow family members to be the caretakers, I thought it was a great initiative. I supported it then and I support it now.

The only issue I want to raise, and this is something I certainly have – I know I've raised it with the Minister of Health and Community Services. I sent him a couple of letters on it as it relates to a specific case, and I'm not going to get into the details of that specific case because it's like anything, in all cases there are usually three sides to every story. There's my side, your side, and then something in between is usually what's totally accurate.

Regardless of any specific case or not, the issue still remains the same. That is that under this program a spouse cannot be the paid family caregiver. Now, I don't know exactly what the rationale is for that. I did receive a response from the department and, basically, the only response I got was that the spouse has, I guess, an inherent responsibility to look after the spouse. In other words, you're married, you're husband and wife, you shouldn't have to get paid. You have that inherent responsibility to look after your wife or your husband in any case.

I understand that, and I understand that government don't want to open up the floodgates and have everybody caring. To have all of a sudden 1,000 people putting in applications to say I want to stay home and look after my wife or look after my husband or whatever. I guess there's a fear it could get out of hand and so on, and I understand that.

In the particular case that I had some dealings with, it was a case of a spouse who – she was dying. She was terminally ill. In this case, the gentleman who had been working in Alberta, going back and forth and so on, he ended up having to leave his job to stay home to be with his dying wife. She has since passed, but the point, I think, is that – and what I had suggested at the time to the minister and to the department, and I just want to put it on the record again here on the floor of the House of Assembly, is that while I understand the rationale and this inherent responsibility for a spouse to look after another,

the fact of the matter is if I had an ailing spouse, and my brother, as an example, had an ailing spouse, we could look after each other's wives and get paid for it under that policy as paid family caregivers.

A daughter could look after her mother. A sister could look after a sister and so on, but the husband can't look after the wife or the wife can't look after the husband. You have kind of a double standard, and the cost is what the cost is. Whether I pay a stranger, whether I pay the daughter, whether I pay the aunt, the cousin, the niece, the nephew or I pay the husband, it's still the same cost, no different.

Of course, the issue is, I guess, and what my suggestion was, is that we simply tweak the policy to say yes, under normal circumstances we recognize that inherent responsibility and so on, and the policy maintains just the way it is under normal circumstances; however, in the case where the spouse is deemed to be terminally ill, palliative, if you will, by a recognized physician, so you would have all that medical documentation to back up, it's not a subjective type of thing, it would be somebody is terminally ill. In that situation, the spouse could be considered the paid family caregiver.

Again, we were just talked about, when I was up speaking before, about the cruelty of a situation where you have one spouse separated from another in a different nursing home because of Level 2 versus Level 3 and so on. This is another case. Like in this specific case that we had, here's a fellow working in Alberta, naturally he needed to be home and wanted to be home to care for his ailing wife who was terminally ill. I think there's nobody here, if you think about it, if that was your mom and dad, your grandmother or grandfather, if it was you or your spouse, you would want that as well.

Again, I am not saying that we totally do away with the program or we turn it upside down, inside out. I'm saying maintain the program and just simply put in a provision in policy that allows for that special circumstance where the spouse is terminally ill, as certified by a doctor, you'd have all the proper paperwork and checks and balances and so on, in that case the spouse could be the paid family caregiver. So I just wanted to put that out there again for the

minister's ears and the government's ears as something that could be considered.

I only have about three minutes left and there are numerous things I could talk about. I do want to talk about Muskrat Falls again. I'm glad the Minister of Education raised that, but two minutes and 43 seconds is not going to cut it. So I'm going to defer until I get another opportunity, but I did listen to the Minister of Service NL talking about the various things that fall under his department. There's no doubt, there's an awful lot of regulations and legislation and so on that does fall under Service NL. I'm well aware of it, as the former critic for that department.

One of the items I raised in the House of Assembly when I was critic for Service NL, it never did get addressed by the former administration and I haven't seen anything really come forward now with this new administration. Maybe it's in the works. I don't know, but we continue to have issues in this province as it relates to landlord tenant's issues and issues with boarding housing. In some cases unsafe boarding houses and unsafe apartments and living conditions, so-called slum landlords as we hear it referred to sometimes.

I know also on the other side of the equation there are issues and concerns that landlords themselves have and protections they require and things that need to be changed to bring the landlord tenancy act here in Newfoundland and Labrador more in line with modern times and so on.

It is very important, because housing is one of our basic necessities that everybody needs. It's just not a matter of housing; it's a matter of safe housing. Because a lot of times when we're talking about safe housing and so on, we're talking about our most vulnerable people. We're talking about people sometimes who have mental health and addictions issues. We're talking about people with disabilities. A lot of times we're talking about seniors and so on. We have a responsibility in this province, as legislators, to ensure that those people have safe living conditions. So it's been a long time that we've been waiting for changes to the landlord tenancies act. It has been brought up in this House of Assembly numerous times. So I'm

hopeful – and I throw it out there to the minister, because he's there, he's listening that I hope we're going to see some changes coming forward –

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

MR. LANE: – in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, it's an honour to rise and talk to Bill 71, Interim Supply. Mr. Chair, not too long ago if someone asked me anything about curling, I would have been at a loss. One person told me that it's placing a well-placed shot on the ice. My initial thought, as a hunter, is that this is a lot like seal hunting, Mr. Chair. But thanks to some of my colleagues, I gained a good knowledge of it and I was certainly tuned in last weekend. I don't mean to be disrespectful to the Third Party but, on behalf of the people in Nunatsiavut and Natuashish, I'd like to bring forward congratulations on behalf of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: I know that you follow social media; there were a lot of people in my district in Nunatsiavut and Natuashish that were tuned in last weekend to watch Team Gushue win the Brier. It was certainly an honour to see them up close and personal yesterday. I know a lot of people in my district didn't have that opportunity and, once again, it was certainly good to see them and to bring forward congratulations on behalf of the people I represent.

Mr. Chair, it's victories like this that we saw last weekend that brings a level of unity to our province. We saw it from Nain to the South Coast of the Island portion of our province. We saw it from the West Coast to the East Coast, and everyone was so proud of Team Gushue. The last time I saw this was, I believe, 2006 when Team Gushue again united the country.

We were proud to be Canadians at that time, and that's when Team Gushue won Olympic Gold and represented our country and not just our province. So it's certainly good to see the team from Newfoundland and Labrador be renamed Team Canada and, once again, take our hopes to the international curling event in Edmonton.

So I just want to get that out there that we are proud and I don't think it should be a one-time thing to congratulate a team that did what they did last weekend. I think at every opportunity we should be proud of Brad Gushue and his team.

Yesterday, I was a bit astonished, Mr. Chair, that both the PC Opposition and the Third Party wanted to put an end to Interim Supply. I tend not to speak my full allocation of minutes. Maybe I don't have that gift for gab, Mr. Chair, but I do like to make a point and Interim Supply, the four years that I was in Opposition, gave us that opportunity to say things on behalf of our districts, on behalf of the people we represent, and to bring issues forward.

Now, either the Third Party and the Opposition have a level of satisfaction to how things are unfolding, or they're looking to score brownie points. In the past 16 years, debate on Interim Supply has ranged from 12 to 20 hours. So we would have to talk about Interim Supply for the next two weeks straight to even come close to Interim Supply under normal circumstances, Mr. Chair.

If they choose not to talk to the bill – and I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands is rising on his feet and he's bringing issues forward. I have to commend him for that. So we've all got issues that we like to bring forward from time to time and I'd like to talk about Muskrat Falls.

Mr. Chair, everybody in this hon. House and everybody in this province know where I stand on Muskrat Falls. I didn't support it, I don't support the project, and I'll just outline a few reasons why. I'll go back to Bill 29 when we sat in Opposition. I didn't know what a filibuster was until then, but we pushed the issue on Bill 29 for, I think, 70-80 hours. We had a small team, but we pushed it until we weren't allowed to do it anymore.

Bill 29 was set up so that the former government could push Muskrat Falls through without having to explain themselves to the province, and they did that. They did it knowing that the province was in a financial mess. They did it without telling the truth to the people of the province. What I mean by that, Mr. Chair, is that they told us that we had a \$1.1 billion deficit. The truth is that we had a \$2.2 billion deficit. That's double an already staggering amount.

Now, Muskrat Falls, we stood up and we laid out all of the factors as to why this project shouldn't go ahead. It was the least-cost option. They didn't listen to us. They didn't listen to any concerns that were forwarded. They pushed the project through, even though the statistics state that a project such as this would have cost overruns that would go anywhere from 54 per cent to 108 per cent. They pushed it through.

Then came Bill 60 and Bill 61, where they wouldn't let any other power-producing entity come forward for the next 50 years so they could protect the project that's causing the financial mess we're in now. They did that to protect the project that's bringing us a lot of chaos; a project that I don't agree with.

When I got elected in 2011, the people in my district had one task for me that topped everything. They wanted broadband. Now, Mr. Chair, the United Nations says that broadband is a human right. For four years while I sat in Opposition, there was no movement. As a matter of fact, a former minister in the former administration stood up in the House and said broadband for Northern Labrador, not on my watch. You can go to *Hansard* and you can see that, Mr. Chair.

In 2015, when we formed the government and there was new federal government, a government that we could work with, six months and an announcement was made for broadband upgrades in the district that I represent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Now, this didn't come easy. This is a result of partnerships; people working together. We had input from the Innu Nation, from Nunatsiavut, from Vale, from Bell Aliant, from the federal government and from the

provincial government, Mr. Chair, and we put the plan together.

The only thing I can say right now, Mr. Chair, before I sit down is that the work is being done. It's not happening fast enough for many of us, but it is being done. By spring we should see everyone on the North Coast of Labrador hooked up to a broadband upgrade that will help connect us with the rest of the region, the rest of the province, the rest of the country and the rest of the world.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I rise again to speak to Interim Supply. I had prepared some remarks. I have to say, I come from a background where my job was to be fairly detailed. You went through what you were going to do in your mind before you actually did it. It's a kind of form of cognitive rehearsal, I think, the psychologists would talk about. And that's kind of the way I've approached these things, but I have to say over my short time here I've come to appreciate a different way of doing things, which is a lot more spontaneous. Indeed, in the Westminster system you're not actually allowed to use notes. You're expected to speak extemporaneously to try and encourage a kind of more lively exchange.

So what I'm going to try my hand at is picking up on some of the things I've heard this morning. I was actually surprised by comments from the Minister of Education, as well my colleague from Torngat Mountains, that in actual fact the length of debate from previous years around Interim Supply was sometimes in excess of 24 talking hours, which is a significant length of time considering as of yesterday we'd not quite got to five.

The other feature of the Westminster system is the concept of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and it's phrased like that for all sorts of historical reasons because it balances loyalty to

the Crown with a duty to oppose government. What I regard as a significant failing today is that crowd opposite have turned it into a caucus meeting with their backs to the speaker. Really and honestly, this is their duty, their role, their responsibility to hold the government to task, to explain itself as to the legislation that it brings before the House.

This is a bill, Interim Supply, which essentially asks every man, woman and child in this province to go into debt for a significant amount of money, not something to be taken lightly; yet, only two of the six Members opposite, seven Members opposite, actually have the courtesy of looking at the speaker during the discussion. Two point seven billion dollars per person divides out to well in excess of \$20,000. I think it would be worthy of a little attention and maybe a little discussion by them rather than simply vacating the space, which I have to say, credit to my colleague from Mount Pearl – Southlands, has taken up the role as best as he can.

My colleague here talked about not talking about the past, but we really have to because, again, a theme I brought out when I first got up to speak to Interim Supply was this conceptual disconnect from the Members opposite between our current state of affairs and anything they might have done over the last 12 years. Really that's, I think, again from a psychology point of view called dissociative bias. This has nothing to do with us, you have to fix it, this is a problem and its arisen day novo. Really, from a conceptual point of view, our challenge is to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, to coin a farming expression from where I practiced last before immigrating to scenic St. Anthony on the Northern Peninsula.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands I think makes a very good Opposition MHA. He, unfortunately, has latched on to a philosophical device called casuistry which I think he could possibly be regarded as the king thereof. What that is is a philosophical device which allows you to argue the exception for everything. There is no policy; there is no generalizable theme that can be derived. Everything has to be an exception. I think it's summed up in a couple of his phrases, like money be damned, I think was one of them, and it can't be about the dollars.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, the disconnect from the previous PC government and today's situation feeds into a problem from which we cannot disconnect ourselves. Money can't be damned and it has to be about the dollars, because \$2.7 billion, which is Interim Supply, which is not the whole year. It is simply a fraction thereof, traditionally, slightly more than a third of the year rather than a quarter, to simply keep the lights on and pay the salaries come the 1st of April.

I think to argue that regardless of the case or regardless of the policy there has to be an exception is fine if that is actually an exception, but when you generalize that to every case that comes before you, really and honestly, you cannot have a policy. The problem with casuistry when taken to the extreme is it's actually a form of philosophical anarchy. That's essentially what the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands advocates, with the best of intentions, but the road to that dark and fiery place is paved with good intentions, unfortunately.

I think the challenge becomes we have to deal with the situation in which we find ourselves. I admire him for actually getting up and fulfilling his role and his duties; yet, at the same time, have to chastise him for the hollowness from a conceptual point of view of any of the arguments he's put forward. They are well-intentioned and made with a good heart but devoid of any intellectual merit.

Another issue for the morning, which was alluded to by my colleague who shares a similar hairstyle to mine, and again he may have had to wear a hairnet to go into facilities. In my previous job I still had to wear a hat, despite my follicular challenges.

Interestingly enough, we spent a couple of day over the previous sessions talking about amendments to the *Health Professions Act*. You know, some would regard that as kind of red-tape, i-dotting, bureaucracy. Really and honestly, the headlines on CBC news this morning, and obviously I can't comment on specific charges laid before the court or specific details, but again conceptually the idea of circumcising people on kitchen tables in freshwater cabins is one which has no

philosophical or therapeutic merit. It is those kind of things that the *Health Professions Act* and its sister legislation the *Medical Act* and the act under which the ARNL is constituted are fundamental instruments.

You go back historically, and I think you will find the medical acts were the first to regulate a profession done from the point of view of safety of the public; although, interestingly enough, at the time other professional groups regarded those as turf protection and in some way barriers and a form of protectionism. They were protectionism, but they were designed for the protection of the general public, contrary to some of the arguments you've seen since.

I think over the years the medical profession particularly has been somewhat hot and cold on who they were protecting, but I think with the *Health Professions Act* and the good sense of this House, and the collective wisdom, the value of having legislation such as we passed yesterday, and making that operate more smoothly through amendments in the light of a consultative process with the council highlights the parliamentary, the Westminster system, at its best. I think we can take some comfort from that.

But again, to loop back to the concept of the Westminster system, I really feel, and as I said on my previous speaking to Interim Supply, it is our job also to call out misinformation and errors of omission and commission. We've talked about the errors and the disastrous approach that got us into this fiscal situation, but the main error of today is one of utter omission by the Opposition to actually engage in any meaningful dialogue on a significant piece of legislation, and they are failing in their duty to the public.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to stand and speak once again. Mr. Chair, I suppose I could

get a little bit defensive and so on from the comments across the way, but I'll just say that rather than stand here on high pontificating to my colleagues, I'll continue to raise issues of importance to the people of the province and to the people I represent.

I make no apologies for that. I'll say to the Minister of Health I'm not asking for anything that's unreasonable. The difference between you and I is I have compassion. The minister is over there talking about the fact we're talking about health care and we're talking about seniors and he said, yes, it is all about the dollars – it all about the dollars. Well, I would remind the minister that we were put, elected in this House of Assembly, to care for and to look after the people. We're not running a business.

I understand that we have to be concerned about the fiscal situation in our province. We all know the mess that we're in; we all know that. We all know the debt that we've accumulated, and we all know that something had to be done to address the debt. We all know that. It's a matter of extremes. I think the only thing that I've ever disagreed with is the degree of which we've tackled it. But we got to remember that we were put here, elected by the people, to look out for their needs.

The only two things that I raised that he seems to have some issue with is I talked about the fact that in the case of a home family caregiver, in the case of where one spouse is deemed palliative, that the husband or the wife could take care of the spouse. That has nothing to do with dollars and cents. We can pay the sister or we can pay the husband. We can pay the aunt or we can pay the wife. We can pay the daughter, we can pay the son, or we can pay the husband. Dollars and cents do not come into the equation. We're talking about making a minor change to policy that will cost no more money but will allow a husband or wife to be with their spouse in their final days at home before they pass away, maybe after 50 years of marriage.

And I apologize to the minister if somehow he has some problem with that, that he has a problem with being compassionate for the people that we elected; too bad for you if you don't like it, Sir.

I would also say, the other issue that we talked about, Mr. Chair, also related to an issue of compassion, and we're talking about separating two people, separating a husband and a wife that, in this case, have been married for over 50 years, 87 and 90 years old. One is going to be out around the bay and the other one is going to be in St. John's, not able to see each other. All I suggested was that we have to, somehow in this policy, insert a little bit of compassion here.

I would say to the Member for Virginia Waters there, if you have some concerns about this, if you think I'm wrong, if you think that it's okay what's happening with this couple, you stand up and say it's okay. You stand up and say it would be okay if it was your grandparents, I would say. It's not okay. There's something wrong with that and it's something that we need to fix.

There's nothing wrong with exploring other models, as was being explored in the past in terms of this aging in place where we set up a system in the future – it may not help this couple, but in the future have a system whereby we try to put facilities, group them together where you have your cottages, you have your Level 2, you have your assisted living, and then you have your Level 3 so that people can age in place with their family, with their loved ones, with their friends.

Now, I don't see anything wrong with that. It's called compassion. That's why we were elected and, obviously, we're lacking an awful lot of compassion when you look at some of the things that have been done. The people I've talked to, the seniors I've talked to, we're definitely lacking compassion.

I think it's absolutely ridiculous for the minister to stand up here and try to browbeat me because I'm bringing forward issues that affect the day-to-day lives of seniors in our province and what we're doing to them. And that's a bad thing somehow. Somehow I don't know what I'm doing. Intellectually, I'm not at his level because I actually care about people.

Well, I'm sorry. I'm sorry if that upsets you, Minister, but I'm here, elected by the people, to do what's best for them. I will continue to bring these issues forward and I make no apologies for it. I said I wasn't going to get upset, but I did.

AN HON. MEMBER: So much for that.

MR. LANE: Yeah, you're right; so much for that.

Anyway, I have four minutes. The issue was raised with Muskrat Falls and I want to talk about that again. We can talk about this forever and a day. We all know what happened, who voted for what and so on. I raised my hand; I voted for it. I have serious concerns about the information that I was given and the information that has now come forward.

I have serious enough concerns that I have written the Auditor General on numerous occasions. I've written the Premier and I've asked for a complete and thorough audit of Nalcor, of some of the very serious allegations that are out there relating to Nalcor, relating to Muskrat Falls, projects that have been awarded and so on. I would like a full and thorough review.

So far, I have not received any support from my colleagues in the House of Assembly – have not received it. Never even got a response from the Premier; two letters I've sent him now and not even so much as an acknowledgement. Why he would not want to do that is beyond me.

I would say to all of my colleagues and colleagues opposite, you cannot simply sit back and say: Well, I didn't vote for it; wash my hands of it. I didn't vote for it. You voted for it. It's all your fault. Let her go and whatever happens, happens. We'll just blame it all on you. It doesn't work that way.

We have very, very serious allegations that have been put out there, allegations of conflict of interest. The former chair of the board, before leaving, publicly, it was out there. Remember, let's load the guns. Let's get the ammunition. I know there was a conflict of interest.

Nobody has investigated that. Then you have to ask yourself the question: Well, why did that only come out when he was under fire on the way out the door, after the Budget Speech that condemned them? Why did he only mention it then? He would have been chair for a long time before that, between him and the other chair, the former chair. He didn't say anything then. He

only said it after he felt that he was under attack by the government.

So if he knew the conflict existed, if he was so sure the conflict existed at that time, he had to know it existed long before that and he didn't say anything. Doesn't that raise a red flag to anybody? Who else could be under in conflict of interest? I don't know. Could there be more? Maybe so, maybe not.

We have a former, allegedly a former engineer of Nalcor who's out there quoted in social media. It's all out there, Uncle Gnarley's Blog, Des Sullivan. I don't know if it's true or not but, by the god, the allegations are very, very serious. He's talking about people actually falsifying numbers and putting it out there to the public. I mean that's what's there. I encourage every Member to read it. If you haven't read it, whether we can prove it or we know it's true or not, read it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: He's actually saying that numbers were falsified. He quit because they were falsifying numbers. That is serious. This is serious stuff.

Why would we all not want to get the Auditor General in to investigate this stuff to find out what's going on? You can't simply say well, I wasn't there, I didn't vote for it, so therefore it doesn't matter. You know about it, I just told you. You know about it, we all know about it. These things have to be looked in to. I'm blown away why we wouldn't want to investigate these things.

Give the Auditor General the resources he needs to go in there and let the chips fall where they may. If everything is done above board and there is no conflict and there was no numbers falsified and all that, as the allegations say, if that didn't happen, if that's all hearsay, it's not true, let them prove it.

Let the AG go out, do the investigation and say all that was wrong. Now we've cleared the air, we know there's no issue, but we don't know that. We don't know that. For to have those red

flags waving in front of us and we're not doing nothing about it, it blows my mind. And I'm someone who voted for it. I'm someone who voted for the project, and I'm saying we need to get the Auditor General into Nalcor.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I won't go into the numbers and some of the information I had in front of me the last time. I do want to speak for a few moments on some of the communities in my district, but before I get there I would like to, in a preamble, point out that while some governments, and some people for that matter, may have stockpiles of cash lying around and can dispense of the need to borrow, we on the other hand as a government need to ensure continuing necessary services for our people which, without doubt, requires the passage of Bill 71.

I'd also like to say to the hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands on the issue of compassion, I've lived a full lifetime, especially in my role as a mayor and a councillor, with great concern for the people in Botwood, Newfoundland. I can assure you that I totally agree with your concept of compassion, but I also want to reassure you and everyone in this House that in my brief dealings over the last year and a half or so with the Minister of Health that he too is a compassionate individual.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Now, to my other colleague for Cape St. Francis, a former mayor – pleasure to know him. A former hockey player; we've got stuff in common. I know, I've done it myself on occasion, probably not chosen the wording I should have chosen, and I know that's what happened to you a little while back, on calling us out on the issue of being fearful of going back to our districts.

The little bit I know of my colleague across the way from Cape St. Francis, and I think he should know a little bit about my background, is I went into the corners, as he did, with some bigger and meaner people than myself and I've never shied away from anyone. I'd like to think that each and every person in this House are there for the people they represent and the people back in each and every one of our districts can be reassured that, from my experience so far, you've got good representation here, on both sides of the House. There are no cowards here. I just wanted to get that out there.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, if I may have your indulgence. Today is my dad's birthday, and he's 79. He's back in Botwood.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: He's celebrating his birthday on this day that's known as the Ides of March, and we all know the history of that.

Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Exploits District. My district exemplifies close-knit communities, cultural preservation, consideration of Aboriginal history and rights, economic improvement, natural resource management and promotion of tourism.

The Exploits District encompasses a varied and distinct group of communities which range from the more populated Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, which serves as the main service area for the area, to less populated communities such as Bishop's Falls, Norris Arm, Botwood, Peterview, Northern Arm, Phillips Head, Point of Bay, Cottrell's Cove, Fortune Harbour, Point Leamington, Leading Tickles and Glovers Harbour, which contribute much to the district in their own significant ways.

Each of these towns, communities and outposts have their own rich history relating to the earliest settling of the area with its eventual unfortunate eradication of our native people, the Beothuks, to early industrialization and use of our resources in logging, papermaking and fishing.

Exploits' considerable milestone in business, manufacturing, military activities and aviation

make this district one of the great stories of perseverance and success.

Grand Falls-Windsor; as I share this flourishing community with my colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Works, I want to point out that despite the recent turndown in the area's economy, Grand Falls-Windsor, even with the departure of Abitibi-Consolidated, has steadfastly continued to not only survive, but thrive.

The closure of Teck's Duck Pond mine also meant a loss of many jobs throughout the region. The current state of the mineral exploration in nearby districts has affected several companies in Grand Falls-Windsor as well. A bustling mini metropolis, Grand Falls-Windsor is the largest town in the district, and the third-largest town in the province.

Grand Falls-Windsor is a crucial service centre for the entirety of Central Newfoundland. It boasts superior industrial and commercial supply establishments, as well as wholesale distributors and retail stores. Health care, religious associations, social activities, such as the Exploits Valley Salmon Festival, and service clubs are widespread. Fortunately, most of Grand Falls-Windsor businesses are healthy and flourishing and the town slogan relates "Perfectly Centered" is well-suited.

The natural beauty of the Grand Falls was the basis of the town's name, as in 1768, Lieutenant John Cartwright named the falls as he was following the Exploits River. One hundred and thirty-seven years later in 1905, Alfred Harmsworth, also known as Baron Northcliffe, decided to look for a new site to build a pulp and paper mill due to the possibility of war in Europe. Harold Harmsworth and Mayson Beeton discovered the Grand Falls and informed Alfred that they thought it suitable as the location for a pulp and paper mill because of the heavily wooded area for pulp and lumber, the potential for hydro-electricity and the nearby port of Botwood.

The Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company was formed on January 7, 1905. The mill was constructed and the first paper was produced on December 22, 1909. Only workers at the mill and private businesses were allowed

to live in the Town of Grand Falls; others settled in Grand Falls Station. Later, at the time of the incorporation in 1938, it was named Windsor for the English royal family. Since the towns' amalgamation in 1991, the name has been changed to Grand Falls-Windsor.

The AND Company set up a town which catered to the social, religious and athletic requirements of all of its residents. Several churches were established in the area once it was settled with permanent residents, and a priority was put on music and the arts in the town. Many types of sport teams were organized. Grand Falls was incorporated in 1961; eventually the Price Brothers and Company Limited bought a large amount of AND Company stock.

Grand Falls-Windsor is the home to the Mary March Provincial Museum, named for Demasduit's European given name, exhibiting the Beothuk people, geology, industry and natural history. Another tourist attraction, the Salmonid Interpretation Centre, situated on the Exploits River salmon ladder, sees thousands of visitors each season.

The Loggers' museum located within the Beothuk park has sadly been closed due to financial constraints following the privatization of the park. That particular exhibit was a copy of the actual living and working conditions borne by the loggers during the high point of the logging industry in Central Newfoundland.

AN HON. MEMBER: That was a great exhibit.

MR. DEAN: It was, yes.

The Exploits Salmon Festival is a very popular event which has presented world-class musical groups, as well as local talent. Currently the AND – Another Newfoundland Drama Company – the Kiwanis Music Festival, now in its 52nd year, the Gordon Pinsent Centre for Arts, the Joe Byrne Memorial Stadium and the Classic Theatre provide popular entertainment, in addition to other private establishments in the area.

The town's hockey team, the Grand Falls-Windsor Cataracts, is one of the most successful teams in the province and is always a great drawing card at the Joe Byrne Memorial

Stadium. The Centennial Ball Field is a consistent venue for larger events such as the Salmon Festival; for those who enjoy the great outdoors, there are plentiful salmon in the Exploits River attracting thousands of anglers each year, and considerable hunting, trapping and white-water opportunities.

Also available to those who wish to apply are provincial licences and permits. Throughout the whole of the Exploits District, there are thousands of privately owned cabins and cottages. Students living in Grand Falls-Windsor are provided a curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12, with continuing education available at the College of the North Atlantic, as well as private schools Corona and Keyin Tech. A government tree nursery is located at Wooddale, in addition to many private farms which produce for local stores and their vegetable warehouses and stands. They are also several floral nurseries and bee farms.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll pick up this later and complete my report on the communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I wasn't going to try and monopolize the proceedings of the House this morning. As I say, I would regard that as the duty of the Opposition. But I felt constrained just to add a little commentary to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands who seemed to get rather exercised in his last polemic to the House.

And I apologize to him if I like language. I have always enjoyed language and, indeed, one of my former high school teachers lamented the fact that I was going to soil myself with matters of

science rather than concentrate on the humanities in English when I went to university.

I think there are a couple of themes I'd like to pick up on from his diatribe. It's interesting that today is the Ides of March because the term "pontificating," which he levelled at me, actually comes from the word "pontiff." Everyone assumes that actually is associated with His Holiness the Pope, but in actual fact it predates that and it was a job assigned to one of the elected officials in Rome, and a tradition that continued with the election of the Pope.

It wasn't actually a bad word in the good old days. It meant speaking with some kind of authority and almost a divine connection, but I can't claim the divine connection, for sure.

I think I'd like to pick up on the theme of hard decisions and compassion. I think, really, to suggest that somehow we, on this side of the House, lack compassion because we have to make hard decisions are joining too many dots. We, as I said, inherited a situation which we did not craft, but we have to remedy. There is an enormous fiscal challenge before this province and I would say to the Member opposite, at the moment, we do not have an abundance of resources.

Twenty-five billion dollars went out the window. If I had that money, I would be able to offer spousal accommodation to people with different levels of care and there would be no constraints on the system at all. So it has to be about using the dollars differently and getting value for money out it.

Unfortunately, the only way this couple could be reunited was for me to go and pick somebody and say you can't go there; you actually have to leave there so I can reunite this couple. There isn't the money in the Treasury to do this because, not only are the cupboards bare, the previous PC crowd sold the cupboards. There's nothing. There isn't anything there at all.

On the point of view of compassion, I think it's very unwise for any individual to claim some kind of insight into how others feel. They can talk about what I say, they can talk about the arguments I use, and I have no problem with that. There's no argument that can't be refined

by debate, but I think it is the height of arrogance of any and all kinds to assume that somehow the Member opposite has some insights into my feelings.

Really and honestly, I do come from a background that makes warm and fuzzy a little difficult sometimes and my colleague, my parliamentary secretary, reminds of this and tries to encourage me to show a face that by and large surgeons keep hidden. I did allude to it, in actual fact, in my comments when I spoke to Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the excellent amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to deal with young drivers and alcohol.

There was a famous surgeon called Leriche who is noted in vascular circles, although he did predate the speciality, and he said that at 4 in the morning physicians visit a graveyard, and that graveyard is those folk that they don't cry over during the day. And I think really I would just like to leave the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands to dwell on that concept for a moment before he accuses anybody of lacking of any kind of feeling or possessing feelings. He is not in any position to have any insight at all into how I or anybody else in this room might feel.

And I think it is the height of arrogance –

AN HON. MEMBER: Grandstanding.

MR. HAGGIE: Grandstanding is a good enough point of view. I wasn't going to be as uncharitable as that, but I would let that stand because it certainly is not something he can claim any insights into, for any reason, under any circumstances.

So I'm going to cut my time short because I really didn't expect to speak again, but I felt that I wanted to get that on the record for the Member opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to rise again this morning to talk during Interim Supply. I'm going to start by saying that I'm not here and I'm not going to make any apologies for getting up in this House speaking on Interim Supply and speaking on behalf of the residents of Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: I make no apology for that, and I don't intend to, because the people of Labrador West and the people of every district in this province have elected their MHAs to speak on their behalf. That's what we're here for. If the people on the opposite side don't want to take advantage of the opportunity to speak on behalf of their residents and on behalf of their districts, that's their problem, not mine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: So I will continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: Mr. Chair, the budget will be coming and then they'll have another excuse why they won't want to speak. So don't carry on with that. I will speak – the only person in this House who can tell me what to say or not to say is sitting in that chair that you're sitting in, Mr. Chair. That's the person in this House that can tell me what I'm allowed to say in debate in this House. It's the person who is sitting in that chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: Mr. Chair, the last time I got up and spoke on Interim Supply I spoke on a very important issue for the residents of Wabush and Labrador City and that was the pensions, the pensions that Wabush Mines and Cleveland-Cliffs left them hanging with. It's nothing short of criminal what was done to the people of Labrador West, and especially the people of Wabush. So I'm going to use my time here again

this morning to reiterate that. That's why I'm here and that's what they want me to do.

They want me to speak on their behalf and they want this government to act on their behalf. Mr. Chair, we have done that. We have done that because we have done with the pension plan what they've asked us to do, and that's to refer section 32 of the *Pension Benefits Act* to the Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeals for interpretation because that's what they want us to do.

If I want to get up here as well and congratulate Team Gushue on their win this past week, the House Leader of the Third Party is not going to tell me not to do it, I can guarantee you that.

I want to say to the people of Labrador West this morning, I will use every opportunity in this House to get up and speak on their behalf because, as I said, that's what they elected me to do. Now, if they want to elect me the second time, that's their choice, but as long as I have the opportunity to do that in this House, I will do it – I will do it.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) pension issue.

MR. LETTO: And the pension issue is something that I've worked on for the past year and a half. The first thing I had to do, the first day after I was sworn in this House, myself and then the minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL had to go to Wabush and sit down with the pensioners and terminate a pension plan that saw them lose 25 per cent and 21 per cent of their pension. Now, if I'm not going to come here and fight and get up and speak on their behalf on that issue, then I'm not doing my job, and nobody in this House is going to stop me from doing that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: So, Mr. Chair, I will get up and speak again on Interim Supply, because there are a lot of things I want to say about my district. There are a lot of good things about the District of Labrador West. And don't forget that the District of Labrador West is probably the single district biggest contributor to the provincial economy, to the provincial coffers of this province, the industry that it develops.

Yes, we've had a couple of bad years. Yes, our revenues and our contributions have been down, but it's not our fault. We will get back to become again a significant contributor to the provincial coffers. And we're seeing that. We're in an iron ore industry that's at the mercy of the world markets. We're at their mercy, and there's nothing we can do about that. There's nothing we can do.

But what we can do as a government is help them through the tough times, help them get through the tough times – and that's what we're doing, and that's what we've done for the pensioners of Wabush. We can't guarantee them that they will get a full pension back, but what we can do is do everything that's in our power, that's in our jurisdiction, in our legislation, to represent them. And that's what we'll do.

So, Mr. Chair, there's a lot I can say. Diversification, data centres, the climate in Labrador West – you've got to use the assets and the benefits in your district, use them to your advantage, and that's what we're doing with data centres. It's cold in Labrador West, they tell me. I don't know if anybody on the other side knows that, but it's cold in Labrador West. Do you know what? We use that cold to our benefit, because it's the climate these people want to have to develop the industry and diversify the economy. We have two data centres: one is up and running; the second one is about to get up and running; the third one is now in the making, and there's more to come.

Now, they're not big employers, but they are big users of electricity. We need to sell our electricity; I think that's what I heard the last few days. So, again, we're contributing.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to sit down but before I do I just want to say again, I came to this House of Assembly; I got elected by the people. I asked the people of Labrador West for their support so that I could come here and support them and represent their best interest, and that's what I'm trying to do.

I don't always do it perfectly, but that's what I'm trying to do. I'm doing my best. I will use every opportunity in this House to do that. There's nobody on the other side who is going to try to shut down democracy and shut down

debate and tell me to sit down when I have the opportunity to represent them. If they don't want to do it – and I noticed that the House Leader of the Third Party is snickering and laughing at it. Well, if she doesn't want to represent her people, that's her problem, not mine.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

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): Order, please!

The hon. the Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the hon. the Government House Leader, I've been advised that as today is Dietitians Day and the dietitians are set up just outside the House to provide healthy snacks and nutritional advice, the group is hoping to get a photograph with MHAs. Right after the session, we can do it in the scrum area or just at the head of the House.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Given the hour of the day, I would ask, with the consent of my colleagues, that the House recess until 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House recess until 2 p.m. today, being Private Members' Day.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House is now in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We welcome to our public galleries members of the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador: Dr. Alicia Wall, Vice-President; Glenda Power, Executive Director; Richard Coombs, Board Member.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well in our public gallery, we have several members from Dietitians Newfoundland and Labrador who are the subject of a Ministerial Statement today.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Harbour Grace – Port de Gave, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Topsail – Paradise, St. George's – Humber, St. John's Centre and Baie Verte – Green Bay.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

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

I rise today to recognize an outstanding event which takes place in my district every winter. I'm referring to the Town of Harbour Grace annual Winter Carnival. This year, the carnival ran over the weekend of February 24 to 26 and, like so many other events in Harbour Grace, it had everything. From a day with the reptiles, which the children loved, to a male beauty pageant that kept everybody laughing all weekend.

The community spirit surrounding this winter celebration is truly unique. Volunteers, the town council and the organizing committee all roll up their sleeves long before the first winter snow to get ready for this long weekend celebration.

I want to congratulate Mayor Terry Barnes and his council, along with the carnival chairperson, Michelle Pike and her seven member organizing committee for their tireless work. The 2017 Harbour Grace Winter Carnival was one for the ages, Mr. Speaker. We can't wait to do it again next year.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Town of Harbour Grace on their 2017 winter carnival. It was a job well done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to extend congratulations to three very bright and dedicated recent graduates who received \$1,000 Electoral District Scholarships in November 2016 from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: from John Watkins Academy, Ashley Loveless, from King Academy, Carey Stoodley, and from Bay d'Espoir Academy, Julie Young.

The district scholarship recognizes individuals who excel in their academic studies and receive the highest marks based upon public examination results. We are very proud of their achievement and wish them the very best of luck as they pursue their post-secondary education.

Achieving academic excellence is an important part of preparing these fine young adults for their future, and I know they will never forget where they came from. We are also truly grateful to their families, their teachers, and all those people who encouraged them to be the very best that they can be. They have proven their tremendous work ethic and we know their dedication and great initiative will serve them well indeed.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Ashley, Carey, and Julie. With what they have achieved already, there is no doubt that they have very bright futures ahead of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Mackenzie Glynn and Katie Follett, both from the Town of Paradise. In February, these two 16-year-old girls were on

the curling team, Team Atlantic of St. John's Curling Club that won the 2017 Newfoundland and Labrador Under-18 Women's Curling Championship in Gander. Along with team members Sarah Chaytor, Camille Burt and the guidance of Coach Dave Trickett, they will now represent Newfoundland and Labrador as Team NL at the 2017 Canadian Under-18 Boys and Girls Curling Championships being held in Moncton, New Brunswick in April.

This is not the first time that these ladies have won. In 2016, they also won the Under-18 Women's Provincial Curling Championship and represented Newfoundland and Labrador at the Atlantic U18 Curling Championships held in Halifax, Nova Scotia in March 2016, and they played in a bronze medal game.

In addition to their curling accomplishments, these young athletes volunteer as assistant coaches for the junior curling program for children ages five to 10 years every Saturday morning at the St. John's Curling Club while they also maintain 90-plus averages in school.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating, not only these two ladies, but the entire team on their successes and wish them all the very best of luck in the upcoming curling championship.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, this past Friday I participated in a "Rooting for Health" event being held at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Corner Brook.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, working with the Kids Eat Smart Foundation, the School Milk Foundation, and the Egg Producers of Newfoundland and Labrador celebrated Nutrition Month in schools across the province by hosting these "Rooting for Health" events.

This unique event brings together nutrition tips and facts, a visit from local farmers and a nutritious breakfast. Farmers on site provide interesting facts and information on their

products, how they are grown or produced, and help to dispel any associated myths. Breakfast included fresh local eggs, milk and berries.

This is a tremendous event which ties in really well with Nutrition Month. The role of farmers in providing healthy, safe food is very important for both children and adults to understand. It is very fitting that the farmers of this province be part of this event during Nutrition Month.

I ask all Members of the House to join me in recognizing the work being done by these various groups in increasing the knowledge about the healthy food that's produced in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the Member for St. John's Centre, I remind all Members to kindly put your cellphones on silent, especially if you're going to be stood at the mic as it does interfere with the sound system.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, we celebrate Captain Caleb Kean, 90 years old. Captain Kean started his wonderful life in Pound Cove, Bonavista Bay. At 10 years old he headed to the Labrador to fish with his father, a schooner captain. For eight years he returned each season, earning \$35 for three months' work – lot of fish and hard but exciting work for a young boy.

Captain Kean remembers Commission of Government, when people earned six cents a day and Confederation, when folks flew brin bags outside their houses to show their voting intention.

Off to St. John's in 1951, he skippered the federal fishery research vessel *Investigator*. Captain Kean sailed the Atlantic Ocean for years. In 1956, he rescued a very sick cook off the *L'Égaré II*, the first open raft to attempt a trans-Atlantic voyage. It stranded on the Grand Banks in fog and no wind for days. Coming

across them, Captain Kean left his vessel by rowboat and removed the sick crew member of the *L'Égaré II*, which made the crossing in 88 days – a world record.

Fifty-six years later, CBC made a documentary about the encounter, reuniting the two captains.

Happy birthday Captain Kean, and long may your big jib draw!

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Health care is a top concern for everyone in our province and quality primary care is critical to improving health outcomes. Main Street Medical Clinic in Springdale is an example of a care model that works through technology, a team-based approach and a commitment to community engagement – health care delivery is changing.

The clinic's addictions program, the only one of its kind in the province, ensures an addict has access to treatment in seven days or less, no matter where they live. Craig, the addictions coordinator, uses his insights as a former addict to help others. In April, he will be joined by Emily, an Indigenous woman and former addict, as his assistant.

Beyond addictions, wellness for all is promoted through education and support. Home visits, e-consults, awareness programs, social media outreach and yoga are just some of the services they offer.

Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of my friend and colleague, Dr. Todd Young, great things are happening in my district. I would ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing Dr. Young and his staff as they continue what they do best: working together to help others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize March as National Nutrition Month.

The provincial government is pleased to support Nutrition Month, in partnership with Dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador and community partners. The theme of this year's campaign is "Take the fight out of food. Spot the problem. Get the facts. Seek support."

Eating should be joyful and pleasurable, but it can also be a source of everyday frustration and confusion. With accurate information and a good support system, Canadians will be better equipped to make decisions about food, minimizing their nutrition-related struggles.

Our government is committed to focusing on policies, practices and creating environments that are supportive of health and well-being. As noted in *The Way Forward*, we will continue to support initiatives that help increase awareness and engage individuals and communities to take actions to support healthy living.

Today also marks Dietitians Day. Dietitians throughout the province promote healthy eating using evidence-based science of nutrition to help residents make healthy food choices, separate fact from fiction and promote healthy eating habits.

I invite all Members of this House to please join me in thanking dietitians throughout the province for their work, and to recognize their contributions to the health of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I, too, on behalf of my caucus colleagues, would also like to recognize March as Nutrition Month and recognize today as Dietitians Day. As the minister indicated, the theme of this year's campaign is; Take the fight out of food. Spot the problem. Get the facts. Seek support.

In line with this theme, I would like to acknowledge and thank the nutrition professionals who work in our province, as well as the Dietitians of Canada. In support of Nutrition Month 2017, the Dietitians of Canada have created an ambassador toolkit, which provides resources that families can use in their workplaces and in community organizations to encourage each other to live healthier by eating healthier. And this toolkit is also available on their website.

Mr. Speaker, though, we call on government to do more, we call on government to make dietitians services available through the province's 811 HealthLine and in the K-12 curriculum of schools. I would encourage all –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to view the online resources and strive to live a healthier life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister and I thank our wonderful dietitians of the province for their great work. My office is flooded with calls from seniors who can't afford nutritious food because of the high cost of housing and the high cost of food itself, or they can't eat properly because they can't afford dentures because the Adult Dental Program was cancelled.

This statement is vacuous and disingenuous. I think the minister needs to spot the problem, get the facts and give support.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

March is Pharmacist Awareness Month in Canada.

There are approximately 700 registered pharmacists in our province and they are valuable contributors to the health care system. I am pleased to take this opportunity to recognize their important work.

Mr. Speaker, the expertise of pharmacists goes well beyond simply dispensing medications. As front line care providers, pharmacists play a major role in helping people manage their most valuable possession – their health.

Pharmacists are trusted voices and leaders in their community. Our government is committed to enabling pharmacists to work to their full scope of practice, and we're on the road to achieving this.

They are important members of primary health care teams, working on population health needs to better manage chronic conditions. They're valued partners in the design of the prescription monitoring program and pharmacy network – both vital tools in the fight against opioid abuse.

By continuing to work with pharmacists, I know together we can positively improve the health care system in our province, leading to better health outcomes and a healthier population.

I ask all Members in this hon. House to join me today in marking March as Pharmacists Awareness Month.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement this afternoon. And we join with government in recognizing and thanking our approximately 700 registered pharmacists.

Pharmacists do play a valuable role in the delivery of primary health care services. We firmly believe they can continue to play an even greater role. That's why we worked closely with pharmacists to expand their scope of practice. As a result of our work with the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, pharmacists are now permitted to administer medications by injection and inhalation, including the all-important flu vaccine. Pharmacists can also now prescribe for minor ailments.

Pharmacists are able to further utilize their skills and deliver important health services because their scope of practice is expanding. I encourage government to continue to work with pharmacists on ways we can continue to improve the primary health care system.

Thank you.

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. I also join with him and with my colleague in the Official Opposition in thanking and congratulating the pharmacists for the contribution that they made to the people of this province. They help people with chronic conditions, addiction recovery, and adjustment to medication, to name a few things. Sometimes they are the only health support in small communities.

I'm sure they would agree that one of the most crucial things needed to ensure full accessibility and affordability for people requiring medication is a national pharma care program, which I hope the minister will keep looking for.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Premier Ball and I will be attending Seafood Expo North America 2017 taking place in Boston from March 19 to 21.

We will be accompanying our world-class seafood marketing team and the Newfoundland and Labrador delegation to join the 1,200 companies, and over 21,000 buyers, suppliers, media and other seafood professionals at North America's largest seafood event.

Mr. Speaker, this event provides a great opportunity to promote our quality seafood products to fishing industry representatives and other seafood professionals from around the world.

More than 100 companies will be represented at this year's show presenting many new potential market opportunities for our province's processing sector. This government will continue to work closely with our seafood producers to provide support to meet the challenges of establishing relationships with current, new and emerging markets for our seafood products.

Mr. Speaker, ahead of Seafood Expo, I am pleased to release the 2016 Seafood Industry Year in Review which provides details on our industry. Last year, the production value of our seafood industry reached yet another record high, totalling over \$1.4 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Nearly 20 per cent of that came from our evolving aquaculture sector, which continues to demonstrate significant growth.

The Seafood Industry Year in Review is now available on our department's website.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 in advance for his statement. The seafood industry is a tremendous value to our province today and it always has been. I truly believe that we should take every opportunity to promote our fishery and our seafood sector. This is even more important, given the situation we find ourselves in today.

The Seafood Expo is a great place to showcase our quality seafood products that Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer. I'm glad to see that government is finally making an effort to promote and increase the markets in the industry. Hopefully this trip to Boston will motivate the minister and the Premier to do more.

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. The industry the minister oversees has been shortchanged by \$180 million in promised funding by his own leader. He has settled for \$100 million with no details on how it will be spent.

The minister is facing a crisis as shrimp and crab quotas are forecast to decline more quickly than groundfish quotas rebound. Hundreds in the industry face economic devastation. I look forward to hearing what his plan is for using the \$100 million to help those people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said that he was proud to announce a significantly reduced fisheries fund, reduced from what was promised by the Liberals.

So I ask the Premier: If \$100 million is truly guaranteed for the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, why didn't Minister Foote bring full details and a cheque with her so this money could flow right away?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess the people of the province were wondering back a few years ago why we didn't even see a boarding pass from a federal minister to show up at the announcement that was made just a few years ago. Minister Foote came to the announcement, made the commitment on behalf of the federal government, Mr. Speaker, of \$100 million for the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador and also made the commitment on behalf of the federal government to be there with more, not up to \$280 million. The federal government has committed to doing what is required for the transition of the fishery, for the growth of the fishery in our province. That's what she came delivering, Mr. Speaker.

It's only fair that we not exclude the industry from this discussion. That's what we're committed to do, Mr. Speaker. Partnerships are the pillar of this administration, and it will continue to be that way because that's where the success of the fishery will be in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, they may claim that partnership is a pillar, but trust is certainly not one, I can assure you of that. The Premier is asking us to trust him. Last May, the Premier

had a rare moment when he was very clear and he said the Liberal government would not give up minimum processing requirements.

So I ask the Premier: In your rush to sell out the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, at what point in the last 10 months did you decide to drop minimum processing requirements?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said yesterday, there were no conditions put on the \$100 million that was required. It's interesting to note, though, that it's the Leader of the Opposition, the former PC premier of this province, that said MPR – as a matter of fact, he said you couldn't put a value on them because he didn't know what the impact would be, Mr. Speaker.

So by his own admission, if we had to use his math, it would be probably little or nothing. So, Mr. Speaker, there were no conditions put on the \$100 million. It's meant to be a transition. More will come; I'll continue to say.

My concern, when I talk to fish processors, when I talk to harvesters and plant workers, I'm thinking of the people on the Northern Peninsula, the Bonavista Peninsula, up on the Baie Verte Peninsula, that are concerned about the future of the fishery in our province.

The Members opposite, the PC Party, what they're concerned about is political gain, Mr. Speaker. They delivered nothing for the fishery. We are going to deliver the future for the fishery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the province have great reason to be concerned because they can't believe anything that the government opposite says or tries to sell to them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: And yesterday, the Premier did say a lot. He said a lot more outside of the House when he continued to make conflicting statements. He suggested yesterday that the province might be on the hook for \$50 million. Now, it sounds like \$50 million of the \$100 million.

I'm not sure, Premier, tell us, is that accurate? Or do you have a different story today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we were talking about yesterday in the media was about what would be required for the province in terms of cost sharing, with a sharing arrangement. No conditions, Mr. Speaker – if the Members opposite would actually just do one simple thing, go and look at the press releases that have been out there already. Cost sharing – we will be there as active participants in this fund, because we are concerned about people attached to the fishery in this province. The province will be there in partnership with the federal government; more will come, Mr. Speaker, if required. That has been very, very clear.

Stakeholders, private industry, harvesters, the provincial government, along with our federal government, will all be involved in making sure the future is bright for the fishery in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, the people should read the press releases. Read the Ottawa press release. Because the Ottawa press release doesn't even refer to the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery fund. That's the fact. And I'll tell you another fact, Mr. Speaker; the fact is that Members opposite are denying that people in the province don't trust them anymore. Simply don't trust them.

The Premier also said yesterday the province could be contributing upwards of 30 per cent. Now 30 per cent is \$30 million; he's also talked about \$50 million.

So Premier, is that correct, the province could have to contribute up to 30 per cent of that fund?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the application process for this fund, we want to get this money out the door. We realize that this fishery is facing a very critical situation. I'm concerned about the families that are attached to this fishery in our province.

The province will be there, Mr. Speaker. The cost-sharing arrangement will depend on where it would need to be. In some cases, if the Members opposite would just look at the information, the federal minister made it quite clear. If it means the federal government will need to be more than the 30-70, well they're willing to do that, Mr. Speaker. That's been there.

But what we're going to do is what we've always done. When he talks about the people of this province and being concerned about their future, they are concerned simply because there was no future at all attached to the previous administration. They burdened this province with debt, they set the future up for doubling of electricity rates, Mr. Speaker, and we are left to manage our way through this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And the Premier continues with his fiction, storytelling and spin, there's no doubt about that. His conflicting statements yesterday are a good example of that. Because yesterday the Premier said that the province would be able to get a portion of a \$30 million marketing fund.

So I ask the Premier: Does the \$30 million marketing program come from the Atlantic

Fisheries Fund, or will that come out of the Newfoundland fund?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you talk about fiction, if you listened to the Leader of the PC Party yesterday answering questions in this House, leaving \$300 million off the table, that's what he was referring to. He didn't explain to the people of this province that \$120 million of the fund, that phantom fund that he talked, \$120 million of that was from the province. Up to \$280 million from the federal government, which they could not deliver – they could not deliver to the people of this province. Because what was happening, doors were being slammed in their back; the only phone that was answered was with an answering machine, Mr. Speaker. No one was returning calls.

Mr. Speaker, we are working in collaboration with our federal colleagues, and we're going to work with the industry, and the province will be there to support the fishing industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another great example of when the Premier can't answer a question, he likes to go back and blame it on somebody else.

So I'll ask him again: The \$30 million marketing fund, does that come out of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund or out of the Newfoundland and Labrador fund?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the fund is \$325 million. The \$30 million comes as a marketing, not from –

AN HON. MEMBER: You can't answer it.

PREMIER BALL: I can answer it, I say, Mr. Speaker; it's very clear. The \$30 million is a separate fund altogether. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will get a minimum of \$100 million – \$100 million to the province to invest in the future.

And why would we settle for \$280 million? Why would ever put an arbitrary number in place? We will be there with our federal colleagues. It was Minister Foote who said on behalf of the federal government that they will deliver more than \$280 million, if required, for the future of this province.

The industry likes it, Mr. Speaker, fish processors like it and harvesters like it. The previous administration delivered nothing to them, provided no hope to the future for the fishery, Mr. Speaker. This is just a start of what will be a bright future for the fishery.

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we heard it all now. Why would the fishery accept a \$280 million contribution from the federal government for the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador? Unbelievable. When what he's talking about there, realistically, is likely going to be a \$30 million or a \$50 million contribution from the federal government. That's what he's saying; fiction, storytelling and spin, and he wonders why people can't trust him.

The Premier tried to sell the province that \$100 million is more than \$280 million. He just did it now. He said a \$100 million federal fund; he said 30 per cent paid by the province. He's also said \$50 million could be paid by the province. The Premier said no strings attached, and then he said the details haven't been worked out yet. The process could be years. He said that money could flow sometime this year. He said the process may start immediately or it could be years. Let's see if we can get one single fact straight from this Premier.

I ask the Premier: Can you confirm that the federal fund will only be in the \$30 million to \$50 million range? When it's all said and done, is that what Ottawa is offering Newfoundland and Labrador, when your boss, the prime

minister, committed \$280 million to the Newfoundland fishery?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting when you talk about political spin and factual information. Mr. Speaker, it is very clear, \$325 million in a fund. So let's establish that, \$325 million – that's a 3-2-5, put an M behind it – that's the Atlantic Fisheries Fund; \$30 million of \$325 million is a marketing fund, not coming out of the \$100 million for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. More will come, Mr. Speaker, required to transition this fishery.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much clearer I can put that. The only person that is actually spinning this and misleading the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, are the Members opposite. They are ashamed of themselves, and they should be ashamed of themselves, for going to an announcement at a party of one, Mr. Speaker, at a party of one, paid for the meal for themselves, no one else showed up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the Member for Cape St. Francis, I remind all hon. Members again, the only person I wish to hear from is the person identified to speak. If you wish to ask a question or answer a question you're welcome to stand, other than that, only the Member standing to speak.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

The minister said yesterday they will be consulting with harvesters and processors on how the Atlantic Fisheries Fund will be spent.

I ask the minister: Will you be holding public stakeholder consultations or will it be invitation only, like your news conference?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, there's one thing that this government has been since we were elected about 15 months ago, and that's open. The hon. Member across the way knows full well that anytime he's contacted me to meet with fish harvesters from his district or any other district around this province, Mr. Speaker, we've been open to those meetings. So it's disingenuous for the Member to get up here today and say that we don't listen to fish harvesters.

Mr. Speaker, I talk to fish harvesters all the time. We were at an announcement on Friday where the Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association was there, the Association of Seafood Producers, individual harvesters, the Marine Institute School of Fisheries, CCFI. I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is this industry is there to support this fund because they need it more than ever.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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'll ask the minister: So what time frame do you have set out for these consultations, and what is the process?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, the input from the industry is something that we seek all the time. I'm willing to sit down with anybody any day of the week to talk about how we go forward with this fund, because the important thing to remember with this fund, Mr. Speaker, it's about our harvesters and our processors.

We're facing a situation in this province today. The number one email that I've received in the

last three days with regard to the fishery is about the challenges that are being faced in the crab industry. I received a picture this morning of a seal with a stomach of 160 female crabs in it. There's our concern, Mr. Speaker. There are the concerns I'm bringing to the federal Minister of Fisheries.

When I meet with the federal Minister of Fisheries this weekend, I'm sure to bring those concerns of our harvesters about declining crab stocks to his attention.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I don't know when the consultations are going to start, but I hope they do start.

Yesterday, the minister stood in the House and riddled off funding for things unrelated to the fishery fund.

Can the minister give us specific examples of projects that will be considered under this fund?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. The things we're going to look for as we get ready to transition this fishery are things along the lines like we did this year with our Seafood Innovation and Transition Program, Mr. Speaker. We funded hook and line systems. We funded some automatic filleting equipment for some plants in our province. We funded electronic jiggers. We funded slush and slurry systems. They are the things that we are going to need to put in our fishery.

The fishery of the future will bring opportunities for us but we will need to make sure that our

seafood products, our cod is the best in the world.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker,

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Both the Premier and Minister Foote had said that some of this money will be going toward aquaculture projects.

I ask the minister: What percentage of the \$100 million will be allotted for aquaculture projects?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: I'm glad the hon. Member is now recognizing the fact that it is \$100 million from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, what we will do is, as a government, we're going to go out and seek the input from people like the Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association. We just seen in the statement I read just a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker, where aquaculture this year is now 20 per cent of our seafood value in this province and growing.

We've had great news in aquaculture over the past number of weeks. We have Marine Harvest, the world's largest producer of Atlantic salmon, looking at the South Coast of this province. They were able to obtain the assets of Gray's aquaculture. I'm pleased to say that Marine Harvest was back in the province again quite recently and we'll be meeting with Marine Harvest this weekend as well to discuss their future plans in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: It's obvious the minister doesn't know what portion is going to be spent that way.

Will funds be allocated according to regions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, the last time I looked at Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to the fishery, we're one big region. The reality is the fishery affects every single one of us in this province no matter where we live, whether we're on the South Coast of Labrador, or we're in Trinity Bay, or we're on the Southern Shore, or we're on the Northern Peninsula, it doesn't matter. We could be in the Bay of Islands, Mr. Speaker, the fishery –

AN HON. MEMBER: And Wabush.

MR. CROCKER: Yes, and Wabush too, because the fishery is the fabric of this province, Mr. Speaker, and we will certainly listen to the harvesters and processors in this province when we decide – not we decide, but when they give us input on how the fund is going to be spent and invested in the future of our fishery.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Again, no answer to that question either.

I'll ask this one: Over what period of time are you planning on spending this \$100 million?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Again, I thank the hon. Member for realizing that this first portion is \$100 million from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. So I thank him again for going on record.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is this Member stands up over here and he talks about the fisheries fund. Mr. Speaker, he was on this side of the House from October 2013 when they first announced the phantom fisheries fund – no, Mr. Speaker, they announced it in October '13. That Member never once referenced the fisheries fund while he was on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: So obviously you don't know the answer to that question either. Okay.

I'll ask another one: Can the minister tell us who will be eligible to apply?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Fish harvesters and processors in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, will be the people that are eligible to apply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Does that include agriculture like I asked you before?

AN HON. MEMBER: Aqua.

MR. K. PARSONS: Aquaculture?

How would someone make an application for this funding today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I thought the hon. Member opposite was at the news conference on Friday but obviously he wasn't. What we're going to do –

MR. K. PARSONS: I was there.

MR. CROCKER: Well, he wasn't listening obviously, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is we are going to go out and seek the input of the people that matter. We're going to go out and talk to harvesters; we're going to talk to processors. We want to see how they need this fund, how they want to roll out this fund.

All I can assure the hon. Members is, unlike their phantom fund, we will deliver for the harvesters and processors of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Trust us again.

Minister, earlier today the Premier stated that there would be applications; people can put in applications.

So I'm asking you today: Will you table those applications that people can put in to the Department of Fisheries?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, does the Member opposite think that the right thing for government to do is to go out and set parameters before we've had an opportunity to talk to the harvesters and processors? The hon. Member represents a lot of people, a lot of harvesters in his district, and he speaks highly of them. Wouldn't the hon. Member think the best thing for us to do as a government is listen to what the harvesters have to say?

We don't want to impose a position on top of the harvesters, Mr. Speaker. The first thing the Members opposite did when they thought they had a fisheries fund was went out and did three consulting reports on how they might do that. We're going to go out and take the input of the harvesters in the province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I speak to harvesters and plant workers every day – every day in my district I speak to them.

The Premier said there will different applications and the funding will be different ratios. Can the minister tell us what the cost-shared ratios will be between the agriculture projects and investment projects?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

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

Mr. Speaker, there's a period here when we need to receive input from the industry and see what the industry wants in such a program. If you look at our Seafood Innovation and Transition Program that we announced in *Budget 2016*, actually doubling the amount that the former administration had in their FTNOP program, we got that money out the door this past year to harvesters and processors and we leveraged about \$3.7 million.

The ratios in that program, Mr. Speaker, were depending on vessel size; for example, in the Seafood Innovation and Transition Program, a vessel under 40 foot qualifies for 80-20 programming, whereas processors are on a 50-50 basis up to \$100 million.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we go out and consult with our harvesters and our processors, find out what it is they need, find out how they feel we should deliver. The one thing I can assure the hon. Member opposite, unlike your phantom fund, we will deliver.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I guess they're looking for our trust again.

Will there be a cap on any project spending?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, the Member gets up and asks one question for consultation then he's asking for applications. We are going to seek the input of our fish harvesters. When you look at the challenges we face in the fishery today – and I can't say this enough because, like the Member opposite, I talk to a lot of fish harvesters, quite regularly, and the message that we all in this House and all in this province need to bring to the federal government is that we need to make sure that the science is there to support the changes we're seeing in the shellfish industry, Mr. Speaker.

I talk to a lot of harvesters and harvesters are telling me that we better get this science right because the reality is some of these quota cuts aren't being totally reflected in what we're seeing from the catch rates in some of these areas, Mr. Speaker. That's what I'm hearing from harvesters.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, a question for you; try to answer this one for us too: Who will review the applications? Will Ottawa be reviewing the applications, or will the province?

Because you haven't answered anything yet.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The part that the hon. Member is not recognizing in his – one question it's about consultation, then it's about applications and who is reviewing the applications. We're going to work on a

program with Ottawa that's going to be tailored for our industry. That's the reality.

Over the last number of days, my department has been in constant communication with DFO in Ottawa. I spoke to the minister's office last night; I spoke to the minister's office again this morning.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is here, we are going to deliver a program that best serves the harvesters and producers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 ask the minister: The next time you speak to the federal minister, will you get the details?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the last time I saw the party opposite in Ottawa they were stood on a cold street corner having a news conference because the doors were slamming in their back.

I can pick up the phone and speak to Minister LeBlanc's office or Minister LeBlanc practically anytime I need to, Mr. Speaker, because the minister is there to answer the call. They didn't have that. They were having news conferences on the corner of Elgin Street.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Who will make the final decision on cost-shared ratios? Give us an answer.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, one of the great things about having an ability to communicate with our federal partners is we can have a say, we can have our say in how these things are delivered for the harvesters and producers of the province. It's absolutely vital that we seek their input. It's absolutely vital that it's a flexible program and a program that suits the needs.

Mr. Speaker, he asked earlier about regions. There are things that may be suitable for Southern Labrador that are not suitable for 3Ps and other areas around the province. It's not necessarily one size fits all. Our fishery changes from region to region to region. And if you look at it, we are in a tremendously awful situation right now in 3Ps. What we need to do is make sure that the program best fits the needs of the people that do our harvesting and processing in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, so it is region to region is what you're saying. You said there was only one region a minute ago.

Who will make the final decision on which projects are approved? Can you answer that one?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I've been in the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources now for about 16 months and I can tell you we have a tremendous staff in that department that put in many long hours and do some great work.

That department right now – I would trust any application with the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources in this province. They're a great, great group of individuals. They've done hard work on this file for us. They'll continue to do so. Right now, they're reaching to our federal counterparts to get this program in place because there is an urgency in the fishery, Mr. Speaker.

They chirp away over there and I guess it's because they couldn't deliver. They did not deliver, Mr. Speaker. I read a piece of correspondence this morning where the federal government wouldn't even put their logo on their so-called fisheries fund.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Member for St. John's Centre, I will remind the Member for Cape St. Francis that I've asked for co-operation in the House.

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, last week the federal government announced to the people of Canada it will be tabling its budget on March 22, giving two weeks' notice. Nova Scotia and other provinces routinely give two weeks' notice as well.

I ask the Premier: Will he extend the same courtesy to the people of this province and announce when his government intends to table its budget?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to stand here and speak to such an important topic. I will await the return of our Finance Minister who is representing this province right now outside this House of Assembly and certainly will be providing as much notice as possible, but I'm going to leave that announcement to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take that as a commitment.

Mr. Speaker, apparently government has no more new legislation prepared for a debate in this House, yet there are crucial issues facing the people of the province. For instance, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has been asking for over two years for legislation for mandatory reporting of critical incidents and deaths.

I ask the minister: Where is that legislation?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development continues to work towards the mandate of December 2015 regarding the reporting of critical incidents and deaths.

We have met with the new Child and Youth Advocate, Mr. Speaker. We are seeking her feedback and we are developing a shared plan. So I can assure the Member opposite that we are continuing to work on that piece of legislation. It is a complicated and complex piece of legislation, and we have to ensure that we develop and deliver the right legislation to this House.

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.

Disability advocates have been asking for a new *Buildings Accessibility Act* for years. The current one has numerous gaps and is outdated. The Buildings Accessibility Advisory Board has made several recommendations to the Minister of Service NL.

I ask the minister: Where is the new act, as well as the long-overdue amended *Residential Tenancies Act*?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much for the question.

I guess on the first point, in terms of work on the disabilities, I am new to the portfolio, meeting with staff and I look forward to reporting back to this House soon on progress and how we'll respond.

In terms of the Tenancies Act and between the review of that act that was started back in 2012, I understand that we did a jurisdictional scan at that time. We need to update that, and we promised to do a review. That's ongoing; I'll be reporting soon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last December the Minister of Municipal Affairs recognized in this House the importance of and the need for legislation to protect the trails in this province. Our trails are a vital part of the tourism infrastructure and attract millions of dollars in tourism spending every year.

I ask the minister: Where is our trails protection act, such as the one they have in Nova Scotia?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question, because it is very important to our tourism industry in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have met with several groups concerning that and what we can do. I have met with the groups and explaining how we can get Crown lands to put the trails and make public right-of-ways. We're dealing with some people who have private land that we use.

So this is an ongoing, complicated issue, which we all agree we need changes, we need improvements and we are working on those improvements. When there are improvements made, we will report back to the House of Assembly but, be rest assured, we are working on that to help with the trails across Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. John's Centre, for a very quick question.

MS. ROGERS: I ask the Minister of Justice and Public Safety: When will we have legislation setting up a full-fledged civilian police oversight commission?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I do thank the Member opposite for that question because it's an important topic, one I've talked about significantly over the last little while and certainly when I was in Opposition. It's a piece of legislation that the people in this province want, and certainly our police forces want. It's something I've committed to having in 2017, but there are a number of things that we need to consider prior to bringing such important legislation into this House.

But again, it's a commitment that I made, one that we need here and I'll certainly stand by that and we'll be debating that in 2017 in this House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting An Independent Court Of Appeal In The Province, Bill 72.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government plans to remove the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce book sales to the detriment of local bookstores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS the province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

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

Well, Mr. Speaker, now that we seem to have had a commitment from government that they, in fact, will give us advance notice when their budget will be tabled, one would hope that in their wisdom, in their budget, they may in fact remove this idiotic, imposed book tax that is practised almost nowhere in the entire world – not anywhere in Canada but in the entire world.

So, Mr. Speaker, one would hope – we're going to take that as a commitment from government today that they are going to give us advance notice when the budget is coming down because they haven't done that before, and it makes sense to do so, so that people are prepared in order to be able to respond to the budget.

They have the opportunity. This is something that they can do. And tonight, the three finalists for the Winterset Award will be reading from their works: Mr. Paul Rowe, Mr. Robert Chafe and Mr. Michael Crummey. All three celebrated award-winning authors here in our province, and all three, along with other authors, poets, writers, playwrights, actors in this province, librarians, people who read books, booksellers, publishers, they've all together vehemently opposed this book tax as seen as so short sighted in a province that has the highest illiteracy rate.

It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. It is my hope that this government will see through the folly of this decision and reverse the book tax.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: 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 emergency responders are at a greater risk of post-traumatic stress disorder;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enact legislation containing a presumptive clause with respect to PTSD for people employed in various front-line emergency response professions including firefighters, emergency medical services professionals and police officers not already covered under federal legislation;

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to rise on this again today. This is a petition obviously regarding post-traumatic stress disorder, and we're going to be bringing in others in the House, but this particular one talks about first responders and presumptive legislation.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I spent 25 years as a first responder. I've learned more about post-traumatic stress disorder in the last year than I've known through my full 25 years as a first responder. I know that industry, medical professionals are understanding more today than we ever did before about occupational stress injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, and also the fact that under Workers' Compensation legislation, a first responder has to be able to identify a single incident that caused the PTSD.

That's not what is known today. What's known today is that post-traumatic stress disorder is quite often the result of accumulation over a long period of time of a stress event, stress event, stress event, stress event, and a single event cannot be identified.

People are not being provided with the services and support they deserve because of that very fact, and I ask and call upon, and these petitioners call upon, the government to change the legislation to provide adequate and good response to first responders and to other employees in the province who are subjected to

difficult circumstances that could cause post-traumatic stress disorder.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, I call upon the Member for Labrador West to present your motion.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for St. George's – Humber:

WHEREAS Crown lands make up 89 per cent of the land mass of the province and this land is a significant economic and social resource for Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS government has recently announced increased access to Crown lands available for agricultural production; and

WHEREAS the announcement to increase access to Crown lands delivers on a commitment in *The Way Forward* to improve food self-sufficiency and supports government's goal to foster economic growth throughout the province; and

WHEREAS increasing access to Crown lands benefits residents, municipalities and businesses throughout our province;

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House recognizes the importance of increasing access to Crown lands in increasing agricultural production and commends the provincial government for doubling the amount of land available to farmers and agricultural producers.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to speak today in support of this private member's resolution. The legislation we put forward on Crown lands was a great day for our government, and I'm glad to have a chance to discuss it here today.

Let me begin by saying that one thing our government has not shied away from is action. Right from our first days in office, we got right

to work undoing the damage the PC government did to this province. There is no other way to describe it. They left the province in a mess.

The province is being dragged down by the reckless Muskrat Falls decision, and our debt is expanding. The situation we faced when taking office was critical. It was unprecedented. We knew the numbers would be bad, but nothing could have prepared us for how bad it really was.

That's the situation we inherited, Mr. Speaker, because the only action they took was to haul the chequebook out of their pockets and sign away even more of the people's money. They left the cash register empty, Mr. Speaker. They even took the float.

So what we're seeing today, Mr. Speaker, by this PMR is another indication of what we're prepared to do to bring the province back to economic growth and prosperity. Back in November 2016, we announced *The Way Forward*. It is a comprehensive document that lays out the premier's vision for sustainability and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador. Part of that way forward was our commitment to Crown land and making it more accessible to municipalities.

Certainly, the announcement that we made regarding allowing and doubling the amount of Crown land available for access to farmers and agricultural reasons is a step forward. It's a road map we're using to lead this province forward in a future of prosperity and opportunity. It's what we're using to ensure a high standard for every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, present and future.

The Way Forward incorporates suggestions from people all over the province. We've heard quite loudly from the people in the province during the consultation process that agriculture provides an opportunity for us as a government to diversify the economy. It's a new industry that has really not reached its full potential in our province, and we certainly see the potential that's there.

I know that my colleague, the Member from St. George's – Humber, will speak later. His district, for example, is one of the most

agricultural-friendly districts in the province, and there are many more besides that; and, yes, there are even some in Labrador. When you look at what's been allocated for agricultural use by our government, it's a very positive step forward because it's an industry, as I said, that needs to be developed and for many reasons, not only for economic growth but for food self-sufficiency.

One theme made in *The Way Forward* is doing things smarter and more efficiently, getting better value for the taxpayers' dollars. Again, this is what we're doing. We're being smart. We're looking at the industries that – I wouldn't go as far as to say non-traditional industries but, again, there are industries that have been underdeveloped in this province.

So what we've seen today is a great step forward, as I've said. I want to read from *The Way Forward* document. This PMR today fits into that and the issue around Crown lands. Now, before I go any further, certainly, I spent 20 years in municipal politics and I've spent many years on the provincial board. Crown lands was a topic that came up every single time we had an opportunity to get together, whether it was at a regional meeting, whether it was at a convention, whether it was at symposium.

Crown lands, and the inability of our municipalities to access Crown lands was a topic of discussion at every one of those sessions. Not only for agricultural use but certainly Crown lands that lie within municipal boundaries and municipalities be able to have access to those Crown lands and to develop them in the best interests of the community and of the province.

Crown lands, as quoted in *The Way Forward* document, "Crown Lands make up 88 per cent of the land mass of Newfoundland and Labrador and are a significant social and economic resource for the province. Municipalities have indicated that they require Crown Lands for commercial or residential development, but the payment of market value for these lands prior to development is a financial burden. In addition, the application for Crown Lands is an onerous process that can take anywhere from six months to three years to finalize."

We've certainly seen that over the years. That access to Crown lands, and not many

municipalities but again for agricultural use, it's taking forever and a day to be able to bring to fruition. So there is – and history has shown there are as many as 100,000 inquiries annually to government regarding Crown lands, including many requesting status updates and application processing times.

In November 2016, we launched the new municipal leasing program that will allow municipalities to access Crown lands within their municipal planning boundaries for economic development purposes; through long-term leases with flexible payment options, including payment deferral until the development is generating revenue. We want to work with the people of this province, we want to work with the municipalities, we want to work with the farmers of this province to develop the Crown lands, because it is a resource that we need to develop for the future of this province.

When you look at what's happening today with this PMR and the benefits it would reap for agricultural production in Newfoundland and Labrador, as I said earlier, farmers and agricultural producers will now have almost double the amount of land available to them, with additional Crown land now available for agricultural production.

The Department of Fisheries and Land Resources has identified 62 areas of interest totalling approximately 64,000 hectares to increase agricultural development. Nineteen areas are currently available, and we are progressing toward making the remaining 43 areas available in the very near future.

Now, I did refer to the Member for St. George's – Humber and the agricultural opportunities and potential that is in his district, but it's certainly not only there in the province. We have agricultural land throughout this province that can be developed. Right here in the metro area, there's great agricultural land on the outskirts of the metro.

We can go out to the Bonavista Peninsula where there is all kinds – Wooddale and around the Humber Valley and the Humber River area; Deer Lake, Baie Verte, Port au Port, down on the Burin Peninsula. You can go anywhere.

Mr. Speaker, there is agricultural land in Labrador as well. In the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area, for instance – and the Member for Lake Melville will know this very well – farming has been going on there for years – for years – and it's been very successful. But we need to build on that; and that's what we're trying to do by allowing these people and the industry better access to land that's available for development and to grow our own vegetables.

Now, part of this, and we saw it here today of course, it very fitting that today we would have the dietitians here and talking about healthy food and what we need to do to be healthy Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and this is another great step towards that. If you look at the definition of food security, what does food security mean for our province? When you look at an island, such as the Island of Newfoundland, it becomes a very important item.

Right now, we don't have a lot of food security. We are at the mercy of weather; we're at the mercy of hurricanes; we're at the mercy of the wind; we're at the mercy of Marine Atlantic, dare I say. There are many things that we have very little control over that will affect our food security. Food security is defined, by the way, and it's a very interesting definition I think, as all people, at all times, having physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate food to maintain a healthy and active life.

There are a lot of words in there, and it can be taken in many ways. What it basically boils down to is that we have to be in a position where we wean ourselves off those mercies that we're at today. We have to have food available within our province that will allow us more than three or four days of fresh vegetables, fresh fruit or whatever product that we bring into our province. Because that's where we are today. I guess what we're trying to say is that we don't need to be there. We have the resources at our fingertips; they just have not been developed.

Crown lands, I go back to it again because, as I said, I spent 20 years in municipal politics. Crown lands were an issue that municipalities were dealing with right from forever and having

the access to develop them. It was an issue that we dealt with on every day.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think today what we're doing here is setting the groundwork, pardon the pun, for development of those lands so that we can have food security, so we can have fresh fruit and vegetables. It is only today that the Member for St. John's Centre mentioned about the high cost of healthy food. It is very expensive to eat healthy, very expensive. I know; just look at me, I can't afford to eat healthy.

We need to find ways so that we can afford to be able to eat healthy. We have to make the bold move. We have to start and develop the resources in our best interests, not in the best interest of somebody else but in our best interest. We have to look after our people first.

I think when you look at the organization which was Food First NL, it's very appropriate, which was formerly the food security network of Newfoundland and Labrador. Food First NL, just think about that. How are we going to meet that definition and how are we going to meet that mandate of this association if we don't have the resources developed to be able to do that?

We see it in the fishery as well, not only in the agriculture industry but the fishery as well. Where are the young people today? Where are they? There are very few of them developing the agriculture industry because there are so many barriers there and we have to break down those barriers so that the young entrepreneurs of this province and the young people of this province can find a reasonable living and a prosperous career in this industry because it's an industry that we need. It's industry that this province needs. It's an industry that we've been lacking for a long, long time.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about Food First NL, they just released a discussion paper called Everybody Eats, in November of 2015, to highlight the issue of food security in Newfoundland and Labrador. The discussion paper was intended as the first step in the creation of a provincial roadmap for the future of food security in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we're doing here today, Madam Speaker, is setting the groundwork for us, as a

government, to help this organization meet their mandate. The mandate that is very important for the well-being and the lifestyle of all the residents of our great province.

I'm sure that the Member for St. George's – Humber will go into more detail in his district and that's just one of the many districts around this province. But, certainly, I look forward to the comments from the Opposition, as well, and I take my seat.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I always enjoy getting up and speak in the House, obviously. It's nice to get up, I guess, here and speak on the private Member's motion as opposed to what we've been seeing the last couple of days. At least it's something.

It's a private Member's motion that we've all agreed to. It was announced a few weeks back and we all supported it. I've been on record as saying on behalf of our Official Opposition and I know the Third Party has also supported it.

So I guess we're going back to the well again to – government is going back to the well to get us all to support it again. I'll reiterate that we do support this motion, this increased agricultural land in the province, Crown lands for agricultural purposes. It's a good move. It's something that I know myself and the minister responsible for Lands spoke about this on several occasions.

My own district, CBS, is historically an agricultural town. It's not built on the fishery. I don't have a fish plant in my district, unlike a lot of other Members, but agriculture, and still to this day, is the single biggest economic driver within the community, outside of the bedroom community aspect. There are a lot of farmers in my district. I know a lot of them. They've been there forever. It's a succession thing, down through the generations.

I have spoken to the minister on occasions about this exactly issue before this was ever announced. I have some young farmers who are trying to get into the industry and accessible land is a huge issue. So this will go a long ways in addressing those concerns. For that, we do support it.

On that note, Madam Speaker, I'm really surprised by government choosing to bring forward this private Member's motion for debate today. The reason I say this is because there's an unwritten rule: You don't bring forward a resolution that will end up embarrassing yourself.

That's exactly what I believe government is doing here in this particular resolution. Like I said, we'll support it. That's not the issue. It was a part of our 2015 Blue Book commitment. In our PC policy, it was a plank on the agrifoods platform but only one of the many planks to the agrifoods platform. As a stand-alone policy, this is not enough. We will say more on that shortly, but that's not the only reason it's embarrassing for government opposite.

The government announced this policy on February 16 and in their news release it was heralded about how they receive roughly "80 applications annually for agriculture development ... the department initiated a comprehensive review of its *Lands Act*. The review committee's report included recommendations to improve the application process based on input from the public."

It went on to say, "Enhancing access to Crown lands benefits residents, municipalities and businesses throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The Provincial Government is listening to the needs of the local industry, and we are providing increased access to help agriculture companies, which will help them grow and strengthen our economy.

"By making more land available for agricultural development, the Provincial Government is helping new and current farmers and producers find new ways to expand and improve their business. Increasing the capacity and competitiveness of the agriculture industry brings direct employment benefits to local communities."

What happened less than one week later, Madam Speaker, the premier announced the grand restructuring of government, yet this is the second one in 15 months. In that news release, it was announced that the Lands Branch would be moving to Corner Brook. Everything at the Howley Building was going to Corner Brook to make it more – synergy was associated, it was the best place where most of the agricultural lands were to tie with forestry.

On the surface of it, if you're just sitting back and you listen to the announcement, you're saying, okay, well that's fair enough. When you put it in all the context, you got a week earlier, we're opening up all this Crown land to make it more accessible for farmers and agriculture, new farmers coming into the system. It all sounded great.

Now a week later you're taking your main office and you're shifting – which staff, we don't know what's gone. That was another issue last week. We went through all that last week. No one knows where we're going and, yes, you've thrown this new policy of freeing up all this Crown lands for agricultural purposes and right now staff doesn't even know if they've got a job. And you've done it a week apart. It astounds me and Members here of our caucus that this was done bang, bang, and no one really knows what's happening, right.

You've got a division of government, which Crown Lands expect to double the amount of lands available to farmers in the province. At the same time you're expected to do this, they're being uprooted. Their headquarters in St. John's is being pulled out from beneath their feet. Employees are being asked to relocate to Corner Brook. Some will not want to move. We're told it's just not some, it's a great many of them. Expertise will be lost.

The efficiency of the office will be compromised by the chaos the government has created. Everything will have to be moved, taken down, shipped away, set up again, who knows where. Because we don't really know where, we've asked that. All we know it's in the vicinity of Corner Brook. New personnel will have to be hired and brought up to speed, and who knows who they will be. This division, kicked from pillar to post, is supposed to lead this

government's one and only initiative to double agricultural land and food production in our province.

Madam Speaker, on the note of we don't know who's going to be looking after this expanded agricultural program, from *The Western Star* there's a quote, and the Minister of AES, the Member for Corner Brook is quoted: So not only are we bringing jobs to Corner Brook within the restructured departments of government, but I'm also telling you we're bringing more jobs to Corner Brook through synergies in our post-secondary education institutes. So I guess the next PMR will be they're relocating MUN out there too with more information to come.

Madam Speaker, we're moving people. We're not bringing new – this is not new employment, and if that is the purpose to relocate, to uproot all these people's lives, that can be humorous to some but I've talked to a lot of those people, they are very stressed. They don't know where they're going, what they're doing. These same people are going to be responsible for this PMR, this agricultural, freeing up all this Crown lands, and these same staff have to deal with that file. So I think it's a bit – it's ironic to do.

One week you're announcing this great plan for agriculture, next week you're telling the staff that – basically, you're blowing up the Crown Lands office out here in St. John's, and we don't know what resemblance it's going to have in Corner Brook. Like I said, all we know is that office will be in Corner Brook. We don't know what building, don't know how many is going, don't know what it's going to cost. I was told there was going to be savings. We don't know what those savings are, other than there are going to be savings.

We're being told there are a lot of staff right now that are uncertain if they can go. That puts a family in a real jam if you have two people working, one got to go to Corner Brook with 20 years into their career and your husband or wife is in the same boat. Do you split up a family? It's a tough decision to make. You're getting these same people that you're expecting to bring in this agriculture policy and you're doing that to their lives.

In my opinion, Madam Speaker, there should be a lot of shame on that side of the House. For the Member for Corner Brook, the MHA for Corner Brook to be out touting to the local media how he's bringing jobs to Corner Brook and hear in my comments here today, I hope people at home that work at Crown Lands can hear what he's saying because that is shameful.

This division, as I said, is kicked from pillar to post. We're leading government's one and only initiative to double agricultural land and food production in the province. I mean, this government cannot be serious. Is this what passes for good governance through careful planning, for even having leadership overseeing a sensitive growing industry in our province? It's utter pandemonium.

Again, I stress that he should go and talk to the workers at Crown Lands. They're not allowed to talk but I can talk for them. They're not allowed to talk. They've been advised to say nothing in fear of repercussions. I'm not afraid of repercussions.

The turmoil you're inflicting on the professionals at Crown Lands is unbelievable, unjustifiable, callous and indifferent to their well-being. Those are strong words but, again, I think all Members should go and talk to people in their constituencies who were affected by this and they'll get the same answer.

Then, at the very same time, they lay on their backs the entire obligation for the success of your one and only agrifoods policy. Like I say, Madam Speaker, it's shameful.

Like I say, when I asked the new minister responsible – and I realize he's only in the division for several weeks. I wanted to ask questions on Crown lands and get around to eventually probably asking something about this agricultural policy. I started out with some very basic questions. Will you confirm which building is going to house Crown Lands? He didn't know. The geographical, physical location, he said, I think it's one of the things we're looking at but it's going to be in Corner Brook. So where does that – they have no idea where it's going. I point out to the minister – with the planning and why they haven't figured out where it's going.

Crown Lands is currently located in a government-owned building. I laid all of that out. I asked him would they have to lease some space. He didn't know. All he could tell me was his colleague from the Department of Transportation and Works has undertaken a review of lease space and the footprint in our province. Government restructuring was going to save \$25 million. That included 300 in management being let go. He threw that into the fact that moving Crown Lands was going – I can't even go there any further on that, Madam Speaker. That to me is – I give him the full – I guess you give him the opportunity to come up with answers and it got silly.

I tell the minister, people were watching and they've contacted me. Those same people – again, this government wants to bring in this agricultural policy and they're patting their backs. They're all so happy. The MHA for Corner Brook, the Minister of AES is so proud. They talked about the jobs coming to Corner Brook. They're going to save the agriculture and they're going to save our food security.

Madam Speaker, do you know what? It's only crock. Everything we're hearing lately, that's all it is. With all due respect, I can't say any other because this government has been given the opportunity to answer the questions for those people. All those people involved, and this is their PMR they're so proud of. People actually care. Not only workers in Crown Lands, which are very important, farmers care, the public care, the real estate people that use the Crown Lands office, the general public that use that office. The amount of business done in that office over there is probably about – I'd like to know the exact percentage. I know it's a high percentage here on the Avalon Peninsula.

So again, moving this all to Corner Brook is fair and dandy, when, as the minister told me, you're going to have two offices out there now. They got one there now; they're going to make it their main office out there, which is the only one that was the main office in here on the Avalon Peninsula. They are taking all that and they're going to leave an extra office in Corner Brook what got 19,000 people – the surrounding area got more, obviously.

You're leaving an area where you got 80 per cent of your business if you're doing it in St. John's area and you're putting it out there. Then you bring this agriculture policy, which I might want to remind the Members opposite, too, there's an awful lot of agricultural lands in this area of the Avalon Peninsula, and there's a lot of people that are going to want to apply, they're going to want to do their stuff, and right now everything's in turmoil. So this policy, we may see it come to fruition in years down the road, but I don't anticipate any time soon.

I'm going to soon wrap up there now. I think I've made my points. In conclusion on this topic, to try to simplify it, because I know Members opposite try to simplify it for us, because there are a lot of days they try to tell everyone that they're a lot smarter than we are – we leave that to the powers that be to make that judgement; I could care less.

It's a very simple thing. You're asking a group of people to implement freeing up this Crown land to make agriculture grow in the province – which we support that, but you got to give the people an opportunity to be able to do this work. Right now, those people are no more concerned about agricultural land than that piece of carpet there, Madam Speaker.

They're worried about real estate agents looking and appraising their homes, what about their children, what about their husbands' and wives' jobs. What do we do? Should we move? What's involved? Are we going to move? No, no, wait now, they're not being told they can move; they're told not to speak. We haven't identified who's going to move, because their directors are applying for a job that they had to write a letter and they haven't heard back yet. So they don't even know if they got a boss, and they can't be told if they're going or not. But then again they're told no, don't say anything because of fear of repercussion.

This is true stuff. This is not a concocted tale; these are true facts. A lot of people have reached out to me, and it's quite shocking when they reach out and they tell me that. I talked to a lady yesterday, she's had the appraisers in, she's getting her house ready for sale, in anticipation that her husband will be moved. She's looking at getting relocated in her own job, but he has not

been officially told, and he's not allowed to speak about it.

So again, I'll remind the government opposite you can laugh, you can poke, you can do what you want. This agriculture policy that's freeing up land is great, no issue. We support it and it's the second time on record supporting it. But there got to be a lot more compassion given to the people's lives that's being affected by a simple move. The move is not making sense, and no one has told us yet to make any sense to us here.

I gave the minister that opportunity last week and he made a total, total mess of it. Now people are out there more up in arms than ever because it was not explained properly. Then I have the Minister of AES and MHA for Corner Brook out there in the media saying that this is not a job creation thing. This is upsetting people's lives and moving it – no one has proven to me or anyone here that this move makes sense. I've given you an opportunity, I've given you it before and I'll give up another opportunity in the coming days to prove otherwise.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's great to have an opportunity to speak about agriculture in this province. That's what I want to speak about today is the tremendous opportunities that exist in agriculture in this province.

I noticed the previous Member when he spoke, he didn't speak much about the potential for agriculture. I'm not really surprised because his government, when they were in power, ignored agriculture for a numbers of years, Madam Speaker. They refused to listen to what the Federation of Agriculture wanted. So I'm not surprised that they once again are ignoring the potential of agriculture in this province, but I'm going to talk about agriculture. I'm not going to be diverted by his comments.

Madam Speaker, I grew up in an agriculture area. I grew up in the community of Jeffrey's. There were fields of vegetables all around me. There were farm animals around. In the Codroy Valley, as well, there were many – some of my uncles were farmers involved in the agricultural industry. So it was all around me as I grew up.

Many people don't think of Newfoundland as an agricultural province. Certainly, I've seen different as I grew up in Jeffrey's and the Codroy Valley in terms of the vegetable production and the livestock that was once produced in those areas, Madam Speaker.

Over the years, we've had a change. There used to be tons of vegetables exported from these areas to St. John's, to Corner Brook, to these other areas but in the last 30 years or so, we've seen a change of where our vegetables come from and where our farm products come from.

A lot of it is imported from other provinces. It's imported from other places in Atlantic Canada and sometimes outside of Canada. So it's important to understand the potential that exists and the way things have changed in the last number of years.

We've seen a move to larger and larger farms. Some of our small family farms here in this province weren't able to compete with those large-scale farming, the economics of scale that could be achieved by having farms that were hundreds of acres and growing, producing potatoes and other crops as well. So those were some of the changes that were happening.

Also, there were changes happening in the way people purchased their vegetables, where they purchased them from. It used to be sometimes that people would purchase vegetables directly from farmers. They would buy it, store it themselves, 30 or 40 years or more ago. Over the last 30 years, we've seen a switch to people purchasing their vegetables at supermarkets, or big box stores and the distribution that happens is again at a scale that sort of leaves out some of the farmers that we have in this province.

We have a number of changes happening in the agriculture industry in this province and, in some ways, some of those reasons relate to why our production has fallen over the years. We

have to look at ways of getting back, producing more food.

The Member who spoke before me spoke about food security, and I think that's a very important point because there's a couple ways of looking at food security. From an individual point of view, does a person have healthy food, fresh food that they can access, that they can eat? Also, there's food security from a provincial point of view; do we have enough food in this province to feed ourselves?

When we look at the fact that we only produce about 10 per cent of the vegetables and other products that we eat in this province, it's problematic. You can see it on the shelves in grocery stores when there's a storm or for some other reason the boats are prevented from bringing the vegetables into the province, we see that we don't have much produce available in stores.

Those are some issues around food security. So how do we change this pattern and how do we increase the production in this province and how do we compete effectively with out-of-province producers? I think in the few minutes that I have today, I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the things this government is doing to increase agricultural production in this province, and some of the things that other people in this province are doing to increase food production in this province as well.

In *The Way Forward*, government made a bold commitment that they would double agricultural production in this province in five years. So that's a bold plan to double the amount of production in five years. What do we have to do to make that happen? One of the things we've done, and it's the subject of this motion, is to make more land available to farmers.

While we were in Opposition, our caucus met with the Federation of Agriculture. I talked to farmers in my own district and one of the problems they raised with me, and they raised with our caucus, was the fact of the availability of land and the difficulty in getting land. So when this government came to power we recognized that as an issue. We recognized the potential of agriculture. We recognized the

problem that existed in availability of land and the ease of access of this land.

We have only a certain amount of land in this province that's suitable for agriculture, and there are many other competing demands on that land. So this government has sort of tried to make agricultural land more easily available to farmers who want to get started. That is one of the things that is happening with this piece of legislation that was brought forward in the last session of the House; that was announced in Little Rapids in my district a little while ago.

Also another thing we've seen is we've seen support for farmers markets. People will pay – if you look at Lester's Farm here in St. John's, you'll see that people like to go to farmers markets. They like to purchase food directly from farmers. It's fresh; it's part of an experience. They take their children. They make a day of it, supporting local businesses. So it's a very interesting trend that's happening in the market. I see similar things happening in my district as well, with the Wells Farm in Robinsons. They're doing much the same thing, and the way they market themselves is a little different.

On Facebook, for example, they'll show them planting the vegetables. They'll show the vegetables growing throughout the year, and then finally at the end of the season you can come to their market and purchase the vegetable that you've watched grow over the year. So there are a number of things that are happening in terms of the way farmers market themselves in this province to compete with the big box stores.

In terms of agriculture and where it's going, I think we have to have large-scale operations that can compete with those large-scale operations out of province. I think we have to have the economies of scale to be able to do that. In some sectors we are, and we have to do that in terms of vegetable production as well so we can service people who want to buy their vegetables through supermarkets and big box stores.

We have to be able to do that, but we also have to be innovative in the way we market our material through farmers markets. There are several farmers markets that are very vital. Here

in St. John's there's a farmers market. In Corner Brook there's a wonderful fine market which has – there's a butcher that goes there. People sell strawberries there, vegetables and things like that. It's a wonderful place to go if you want to pick up some food. Those things are happening as well.

I think one of the other things that's happening is you're seeing efforts to involve young farmers in the industry again. That's important, because if you look at the statistics, only 6 per cent of the farmers in this province are under 65. So we have a lot of older farmers and we have a few younger farmers getting involved in the industry.

The announcement we had on the lands was at Simmons farm in Little Rapids. David Simmons, he's a very innovative dairy farmer there in Little Rapids. Sometimes we think of farming as a sort of low-tech industry but if you go to David Simmons farm there, Pure Holsteins in Little Rapids, David and Sara, his wife, they're both very young people, very tech savvy.

You might be surprised; they have a robot that milks their cows. Each cow has a tag on their ear and there's a system set up where the cows go through when they want to be milked and the robot milks them.

If there's a problem on the farm he gets a message on his iPhone. He looks at it, identifies the problem. He determines if he has to go there or if he can fix it through to his iPhone.

The amount of food that each cow eats is sometimes recorded. The amount of milk they give, if there are any problems with the cow that might be possible diseases, that is all recorded with the technology they have on this farm.

He's president of the Young Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador. He's a good example; him and his wife are good examples of people – the young face of agriculture in this province.

Another dairy in this province – dairy in my district in St. David's is the second-largest dairy in Canada. So it's a very vibrant industry there.

I wanted to also talk about the research station in Pynn's Brook, which is a very important part of

the agriculture. I've been there several times. I've talked to people there several times, and they're so enthusiastic about the work they do. Not only are they expanding the concepts of what we can grow in this province, they're also looking at ways to grow it and what's the best variety of crops to grow in this province.

They're doing that with things like – well, they started off with corn years ago, working on wheat, and last year they grew some canola. These are crops that a few years ago we didn't think we could grow commercially in this province. So these crops are being grown. They're expanding what we do; they're expanding what we do in the industry.

They've also experimented with grapes. Some people see grapes as something that you can't grow in Newfoundland or that you can't grow on a commercial scale. A few years ago in Nova Scotia people thought the same thing. Now we have several wineries in Nova Scotia that are winning awards around the world for the type of wine they produce.

AN HON. MEMBER: I've drank lots of it.

MR. REID: Yes. One of the Members says he's drank lots of it. He's very discriminating in the type of wine he drinks as well, so it has to be the best. So we're expanding what can be done in this province. There is lots of potential here.

Also, I want to talk about different crops. Like, the cranberry industry is another example of a crop in this province where we have a lot of potential. We started off maybe 20 years ago in the cranberry industry, and it's a very capital intensive industry because it costs about \$30,000 an acre to prepare a cranberry farm. You have to dig out some of the bog, you put a layer of sand, you plant the twigs for the berries and they produce. It takes a number of years before they get to the stage to produce. Myself and the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port visited the cranberry farm harvest –

MR. FINN: Along with the minister.

MR. REID: – along with the minister this year. It was wonderful to see the crops being produced there at a scale that is approaching a

level where they can produce, where they can justify a processing facility.

So it's great to see that happening in the province. There are lots of potential for agriculture in the province. I'm just so proud to be part of a government that's taking this potential serious and are looking at making more land available, they're making more funds available for new people to enter the industry and they're looking at programs such as Little Green Thumbs which involve elementary school children, things like Rooting for Health, all very positive, Madam Speaker. I'd like to hear the Members opposite support this motion as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. REID: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

Again, it's indeed a privilege to get up and speak on behalf of the people from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. I want to build on the remarks of my colleague for CBS, Conception Bay South, said earlier. I'm going to talk a little bit about what the plan should be and where we should go when we talk about the agriculture industry, especially when we talk about food security.

This resolution is one that we will support. Not because we have any faith in the government's ability to do it, but because we support the objectives – having already announced a lot of them ourselves. It's like everything in *The Way Forward* document; they are bits and pieces, I think, of some of our ideas.

We keep hearing about *The Way Forward*. The hon. Member was up today talking about *The Way Forward*, but what does the brochure actually say about the policy we're debating here today? On page 16, it states: "Newfoundland and Labrador is currently only about ten per cent self-sufficient in its non-supply managed

agrifood requirements. It is critical that our Province makes significant progress towards food security in light of the global food crisis projected by 2050. In the longer-term, our Government will increase the availability of Crown Lands for agriculture purposes, which will contribute to increased agricultural food production and improve food security in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Here's what it says on page 42: "By 2022, Newfoundland and Labrador will have increased its food self-sufficiency to at least 20 per cent. Our province is currently only about ten per cent self-sufficient in its food requirements."

That's all it says. That's what it says, and those are five tiny sentences. That's what the government's agriculture strategy is in *The Way Forward* document. That's the only words that they use in it. After years of planning in Opposition, consulting with the best economic minds in the province, or so we're told, and after 15 months in government, that's all they can come up with. This is not a plan. This is not a plan at all. A plan states out objectives, lays out a path to achieve it.

Their approach today is like a wish, a daydream, wouldn't-it-be-nice kind of thing. Seriously, the entire agricultural policy in *The Way Forward* document, the Members opposite keep talking about, is no real economic plan. It's a scam. It's not an economic plan. It doesn't set out what we need to do.

The words in *The Telegram* of the Liberal plan, their plan before the election, were magical, fantasy. They compared it to flying reindeer and dancing brooms. That's not good enough. Agricultural producers needs a government who knows what it's doing, needs a government to have a detailed strategy that involves them and listens to them. They need a strategy that builds on the great work government has been doing in partnership with them. They want an approach that is evidence based and best practices.

That's the approach our party took, both government and in our last campaign. We brought forward details on an agricultural strategy to build on the growth that has already been achieved; growth in food like the cranberry industry that the Member before me just spoke

about. Some of the Members, and they know what I mean, this is a great industry for Central Newfoundland. We're making real gains in that industry. Wouldn't the strategy be even more important in partnership with farmers to build on that kind of growth?

As stated in an announcement making Crown land more available for agriculture, it's a great beginning but it's just one part of it. More action will be needed to help farmers and producers. Take full advantage of the opportunities in our province to increase local food production. We've made great progress in recent years and major success stories have to be celebrated, but making our Crown lands available for agriculture must be part of the bigger strategy that's needed.

In 2015, our blueprint, our book committed to make food security a provincial priority, to commit and protect and expand farmland, to commit and relax Crown lands policies for farm use. Does that sound familiar? I think it does. I bet it does.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, I know it does.

Our party also announced that we would grow the agrifoods sector, grow it to support communities and jobs, to take advantage of food security, to supply the people with kinds of healthy, local-grown food that we ought to be eating. Our plan was set out for board targets for food security. We will work with farmers and with the Federation of Agriculture and with others in the agriculture sector to increase the amount of local food people in this province eat.

We asked what percentage of the food that we eat should be produced locally by 2025. We tried to aim high. We will follow the strategy by making it easier for new participants to set up farms and start running them. We will do it by protecting and expanding farm land, and relaxing Crown land policies for the use. We will do it by removing restrictions on farmers related to selling timber clear on their land. We will do it by working with farmers to maintain family-farm operations. And I'm going to talk a little bit about that later on.

We will do it by taking advantage of opportunities to expand primary productions for berries, beef, lamb and pork. We'll do it by making it easier for local produce to get to the markets. We'll work with farmers and the Federation of Agriculture to identify barriers from getting healthy, local food and to find solutions.

We'll work with farmers and others to plan the best way to achieve growth. This is all part of our promise in our Blue Book. We will identify way more than what's in *The Way Forward* document. We'll find and identify and address transportation, storage and producers, where they can access retail. We'll promote and invest in local farm markets. These farm markets showcase the important role agriculture plays in our economy and our society. We'll promote community gardens – and I'm going to speak a little bit about that later too.

Community gardens – groups can help get back to traditional roots and live healthier lives. This is something we strongly encourage and benefits seniors and also our young. We'll partner to support farmers, forums and agriculture in the classroom, programs so that young people can help lead the way. We will work with organizations and provincial schools to expand programs to make sure all school age children have access to healthy food. We'll invest in Kids Eat Smart and expand the program to strengthen the link between local food producers.

We'll also commit an investment to food access in northern and remote communities. We'll commit to these policies because they form a detailed strategy, and that's where we need to be. This is not just about access to land. Young farmers need to be able to access capital. We should consider allowing them access to our business programs, and establishing a guarantee program similar to the fisheries loan guarantee program.

There's no single announcement in itself that will lead us to greater food security. We need a strategy. This government does not like strategies. *The Way Forward* document makes fun of strategies. It mocked the idea of a strategy – imagine that. In place of a strategy plan, the Liberals have given nothing but a wish, a fantasy and magical beans.

To make matters worse, they have made a mess with our Crown lands by throwing the entire Crown Lands division completely in chaos. I'm going to just elaborate on that a little bit, Madam Speaker. I spoke to people at Crown Lands and they have absolutely no direction. People don't know what's happening over there.

If we're looking at moving Crown Lands and the people – the one thing I've learned as an MHA, and I do a lot of work when it comes to the Crown Lands division for my constituents, and the knowledge these people have at that office over there is second to none. They can go back and give you the history and explain things that make it – because a lot of times in Crown Lands, especially where we're dealing with a lot of titles of property, people didn't understand whether the Crown owned the property, whether they thought they owned it or what, but the expertise in that department over there is second to none.

I really want to thank all of them over there for being so courteous to me because when I did have questions to ask, I have to say, they really came through and answered the questions that I needed. Now sometimes not what my constituents wanted to hear, but at least we found out the answers they needed.

Farmers deserve better. They should have the support of this whole House. We believe in improving food security. We believe in growing the industry.

Madam Speaker, I just want to talk a little bit about my own district and my own experience. I know I only have a few minutes left. My dad, he was a fisherman and he was a farmer. I pulled the short end of the straw all the time because my brothers were all older than me.

My brothers were all older than me and they got to go out on the water where I'd love to be, but sometimes I was sent to what we call Deer Marsh in Flatrock. I was in to do the weeding and having the flies eating me every day while my brothers were out most of the times at the fish, but it was a great experience. It was a great experience thinning out the turnips; the same thing with carrots.

I can remember one year, and most of the people in here I guess they'll know, we always judged how much potatoes you set by the sacks of seed. We sat one year 19 sacks of seed, because I remember taking the 19 sacks of seed in when we were setting them and having them ready for the day we had to set it, which was a lot of potatoes back then.

Times have changed. It's something we need to do as a government and as a party, that they need to do, is to promote – we have to realize how healthy our own local food is.

Madam Speaker, I like to eat. There's nothing better than Sunday dinner and when you can have fresh vegetables. I know each year when the farmers market goes down in Torbay on the side of the road you can see the lineup of cars and everybody wanting fresh vegetables. It's something we have to promote. We have to really promote our local industry. It's important to all of us that we do support our local industry.

We talked today about children. There's nothing better we can do for our children than to make sure they eat healthy. It's great to be able to go to all your fast food places and everything else, and we all enjoy it, but every time we get the opportunity to support our local farmers and support the produce they produce, it's important that we bring it home.

I'm just going to go back to Crown lands again. This move that government made was a great move. It's a good move to open more land, but I hope by moving the office out of St. John's with the expertise that was there – it looks like we may have to train all these new people. This policy will be years, years trying to come through so that people can access more land.

We talked a little bit – I know the Member who introduced it talked about Kids Eat Smart. That's a great program that takes advantage of – we have a lot of children in our schools that, unfortunately, don't get to eat proper foods. The breakfast program, I always support it and I'm very happy it's in a couple of schools in my district.

We have children who go to school hungry. We have children who really need to make sure – we look at our health and the health of our children.

There's nothing better you can do for your child than to make sure they're eating proper foods. We produce it here in Newfoundland. We should make sure as parents, and especially here in government, we should be doing everything we can to help our farmers.

We talked today about young farmers, and a lot of people – I think the Member mentioned that there are not a lot of young people getting into farming, but I think if we promote it a lot more, opened up more land, made it easier for young people to stay with their families, because I tell you, it's like an addiction. It's like the fishery. The only reason why farmers leave is because there's no future in it. It's the same thing with our industries like our – it's important for rural Newfoundland. It's important for my district. It's important for the District of CBS, like the Member stated.

So I think government, while you're opening up land, there's so much more you can do. Just don't close the door on doing one thing. Have a policy. Get a policy and get a strategy so people can understand where we're leading, where the future is going to bring the farm industry and agriculture in our province.

This is a great area to grow. I know we have great land that can grow great vegetables, and there are a lot of varieties. There are a huge number of varieties of different vegetables that can be produced right here in the province. So I call on government, while this is a great move, there's so much more you can do and now is the time to get at it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It is indeed a pleasure to stand this afternoon and talk to our private Member's motion today and I guess reflect on some of the things we've done since we became government with regard to agriculture in this province. Because, Madam

Speaker – or sorry, Mr. Speaker. In 15 short months we've made great progress in the amount of land that's available in our province for the agriculture industry.

One of the first things we did, under the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, or the Minister of BTCRD, was they got together and identified 62 areas of interest all over the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. These areas of interest have now been areas that we can go and start farming. There are 62, we have 19 that are ready to go and the other 42 are very close. They range from everywhere, from the districts in Labrador and all throughout the province.

One of the things I think when you look at the availability of farmland, you look around, I look around to many of my colleagues and primarily I guess to some extent, my colleagues from off the Avalon Peninsula. My colleague from St. George's – Humber who spoke earlier on this and my colleague from Bonavista, I think who is going to have some remarks later, my colleague from Lewisporte – Twillingate, and my colleague from Terra Nova. These are farming areas in our province, Mr. Speaker, and it's very important we support that because here we are today only growing 10 per cent of what we eat. We can't be there anymore, Mr. Speaker.

So we recognize the need of increasing our food sustainability and food self-sufficiency. One of the things that is so important in doing that is freeing up Crown land. When you look at 64,000 hectares of land, that will more than triple the land base available for farming in this province. I can tell you the industry, whether it's the young farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, the Newfoundland and Labrador dairy farmers – I spoke yesterday at the Newfoundland and Labrador egg farmers – we have a lot of farming in this province, and it's important we support that. One of the ways we can support that is the availability of Crown lands and changing it so that no longer will it take three years for a farmer or anybody in this province to get a piece of Crown land.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs worked diligently on this when he was responsible for Crown lands and his parliamentary assistant as

well. They worked diligently on Crown lands and making Crown lands accessible, not only for the farming industry but for municipalities as well. Because one thing that's very important for us to do is to free up that Crown land.

We've been working with municipalities, Aboriginal groups, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. These are entities that have overlapping areas when it comes to Crown lands in the province and they've been very receptive to this. We have met with the industry stakeholders and discussed the priorities and the priorities that we have as a government. When you look around, there are many opportunities.

I would be actually remiss, Mr. Speaker, and I meant to do this in the beginning, but I'd like to just let the farmers know that were affected by this weekend's wind storm that, as a department, we're there to assist in any way we can. We have farmers right here within the city limits that lost seven of 15 greenhouses on the weekend, who lost full crops in some of these greenhouses.

These greenhouses, this winter, are growing fresh lettuce here in the city. We have a greenhouse right now in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's that's getting close to having a crop of fresh strawberries ready to harvest and we'll be harvesting strawberries in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's within the next couple of weeks. We see these initiatives and things that we can be doing here in the province and some of the great advancements that we made.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Cape St. Francis referenced other support, other than the land. I can assure the hon. Member that the reservation of Crown lands for agriculture is only step one. It's only step one. In last year's budget, we committed over \$10 million to Growing Forward and the provincial agriculture program. I'm happy today to say that this coming July, Canada's agriculture ministers will be here in St. John's where we hope to announce the next framework agreement on agriculture and agriculture support for the country.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important. When we represent the province on a national stage, it's important that we make sure – and we hear this all the time from groups like the Federation of

Agriculture – that Ottawa hears that our agriculture industry is different compared to a lot of the agriculture industries in the country. Many provinces are in maintenance stage, while we're in an infancy stage when you look at the fact that we're only growing 10 per cent of what we're eating here in the province.

So when you look at the economy and things over the past decade or so and you see some of the failures of the previous administration and the failures come into the fact that they had \$25 billion in oil revenue – unfortunately, if you look back over that period of time, farm cash receipts didn't increase. They didn't diversify. Why did we not diversify the agriculture sector when we had the opportunity? It's similar to the fishery; it's similar to the forestry. These are renewable, natural resources that we didn't invest in when we had the opportunity, when we had \$25 billion in revenue coming from a non-renewable resource.

What a better thing to do, Mr. Speaker, than take revenue from a non-renewable resource and invest it in a renewable resource? That's progressive thinking, but that was lacking and we can see it. The numbers don't lie. Farm cash receipts didn't increase in their time in government and it's unfortunate, very unfortunate.

The Member for CBS got up this afternoon and went on a little bit of rant at one point talking about today's private Member's motion and called it silly. Well, when you look at the world today and the fact that 30 per cent of the world's population by 2030, or 50 per cent of the world's population by 2030 is going to live in Asia and they're going to compete with us – make no mistake, the people in Asia are going to compete with us for our food supply, and we need to increase what we can do for ourselves.

This is not just about the situations we see when Marine Atlantic has two days and can't get across the Gulf and you go into a supermarket and the shelves are starting to run down. That's one food security issue. There's a much larger food security issue when we realize that as populations grow, primarily in Asia, we're going to compete for all of our commodities, whether it's wheat, canola and the rest of the commodities that we consume every day.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about availability of Crown lands and the process. As an Opposition MHA, and even today, I have many calls in my district about Crown lands. There was a Crown lands review done. It was this government that brought in changes to the Crown lands act this past fall sitting.

AN HON. MEMBER: Great legislation.

MR. CROCKER: A great piece of legislation.

I'm happy to say today, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that came out of an independent lands act review with regard to Crown lands is digitization of the vault. So the vault, which exists here in the city today, we have a plan that will fully digitize that vault so those records will be accessible to anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, with the click of a mouse. And that's a piece of work that we've undertaken, we've made a commitment to get it done, and I can assure the Members of this House that that vault will be digitized, once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, you look at other things and the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis brought it up and some of my colleagues also when you talk about farm markets and you see the great investment here in St. John's in the farm market. We've seen an investment in Clarenville this coming year into a farm market. We saw one last year in Central, Mark's Market in Wooddale. These markets are popping up all around the province simply because there's a demand. There is a demand everywhere we look around the province for these types of markets and what they can provide to our society.

AN HON. MEMBER: The old Metrobus.

MR. CROCKER: Exactly, the old Metrobus facility is going to become a farmer's market.

We see it all around. If you look at the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, when you're going in to Bay Roberts, there's a farmer there, Roots I think it's called, Root Seller, and he's providing fresh fruits and vegetables to the people of that region. Some of the areas of interest are actually in the Makinsons and Bay Roberts area, along with the Markland area. So there's opportunity here on the Avalon as well. And great opportunity in the greenhouse

industry when you look at some of the things that are happening here within the city limits in the greenhouse industry.

Also, chatting with my colleague for Lewisporte – Twillingate talking about the community –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. CROCKER: He is my friend.

We chatted about the fact that the Community Healthy Living Fund actually has an element that supports community gardens, and community gardens is something I think that everybody in this House would agree can play a vital role, not only in teaching farming but also providing fresh vegetables to people in communities that don't necessarily have the availability of land to do so.

Mr. Speaker, this being World Nutrition Month and this being Dietitian's Day, on my way into the House I got an infographic and it's called My Plate. When you look at it, you see fruits and grains and vegetables, protein and dairy. The unfortunate part of that is – for example, when we look at dairy as a province, we are self-sufficient in dairy, but one of the things that this new Crown lands will do, it will open up abilities for our dairy farmers to grow more of their own forage and that will make them less reliant on outside sources.

One of the things that struck me most back in September when I took on the role in this new department, I asked the question: We must be growing enough potatoes in this province to support ourselves? Well, to my surprise, we grow one in six potatoes we eat in this province.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. CROCKER: One in six potatoes that we eat in this province.

We have a tremendous piece of work to do to ensure that we grow more than one in six potatoes in this province. This Crown land will certainly help to do that. We have some great Crown land throughout the province. We found some soil in the Cormack area. If you could see the pictures, it resembles Prince Edward Island

and there are hundreds and hundreds of acres of this soil.

Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to my statement about this being National Nutrition Month and Dietitians Day. What Food Security NL has told us for some time that the challenges we face is getting new entrants into farming. Currently, only 6 per cent of our farmers are under 35 years of age. Albeit, our self-sufficiently in dairy and eggs, we have to become more self-sufficient in the forage.

My colleague for St. George's – Humber raised the Pynn's Brook research station and the work that's been done there. If you look at last year, we had the famous canola field and that was quite successful; but if you look at some of the origins of what has happened out at Pynn's Brook and the work in the Pasadena area, about five or six years ago we were growing cattle corn there as an experiment, and it worked out. Today, we have farmers actually in this province who are self-sufficient in cattle corn. We have dairy farmers who are now self-sufficient in winter wheat.

So you can see what's happening. By government putting an emphasis on R&D, we're helping our farmers. Mr. Speaker, we have a very active farming community in this province. They may be small in numbers, but I can assure they're strong in stature.

I've been working closely with the Federation of Agriculture and the NL Young Farmers. I was in Little Rapids a couple of weeks ago, along with my colleague for St. George's – Humber and my colleague for Stephenville and my colleague for Corner Brook, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier, where we announced Growing Forward funding, we announced Crown lands funding and Crown land that we're going to make available.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot to do, but I can assure you that it's policies like this one and it's a department that is driven – and I can assure you the agriculture and lands branch in Corner Brook is a very driven division of this government. I can assure you the hard work that these men and women are doing day in and day out will help us get to that goal of 20 per cent by 2022. I'm confident of that, and I'm confident

that working together as a province we can certainly meet the challenges that we have in food security.

So again, it's an absolute pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon to talk about food security in our province and I can assure you, as a government, we will follow through on our commitment to food security.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am quite pleased to stand this afternoon and to speak to this private Member's resolution, particularly because of the fact that it's not just talking about releasing Crown lands; it's the purpose of why it's releasing Crown lands.

One of the researchers in our office had a bit of a funny note at the top of my notes and I'm going to say what he's written because I did it to the MHA for Torngat Mountains earlier and he said: Yeah, that's funny. It is: I wanted to thank the two MHAs from the legendary farming districts of Labrador West and Torngat Mountains. But the thing is as I said to our researcher and the Member for Torngat Mountains and I recognize together, in actual fact, historically especially on the north coast with the Mennonites, not the Mennonites the –

AN HON. MEMBER: Moravians.

MS. MICHAEL: The Moravians, thank you.

With the Moravians – they did a lot of farming very definitely and now there are a lot of experimental things going on in Labrador. I know in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area, I'm not sure about Labrador West, but a lot of attention is starting to be paid to farming in Labrador. I think it's interesting that it was the two MHAs for Labrador who brought this resolution forward.

As was pointed out by my colleague for the district of Flatrock, he didn't use this language but subsistence farming has been part of our history for generations and generations. From the beginning, people had to survive and they just didn't survive on fish or survive on game; they also grew vegetables. No matter who you talk to who can go back in their memory of growing up in rural Newfoundland and Labrador they have strong memories of the subsistence farming that went on. And we joke about ourselves being a rock and all that kind of thing, but this rock, when it comes, for example, to our root vegetables, root vegetables love our soil and they must love rocks too.

I have a friend who is from India and her mother comes here to visit often. What does she love? She loves our turnip. She said never has she ever tasted turnip like the turnip that's grown in Newfoundland and Labrador. So we have a very particular environment for growing and the environment, it's not just the soil, it's everything that surrounds the soil as well. That's what you have to look at when you're talking about farming.

So, yes, I am glad that the government is talking about making more Crown lands available for increasing agricultural production. It's extremely important and we know that we have quite a bit of Crown land out there, and probably much more than we realize that can be used for agriculture.

Working towards food sufficiency is so important, as all of my colleagues have pointed out here today. As the Minister for Fisheries and Land Resources has pointed out, there are areas where you wonder why we aren't doing better. He used the example of potatoes. Well, I know for myself there's not a potato cooked in my house that comes from anywhere except this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

And with all of our root vegetables. That's why it was bit disturbing this week to know that Lester's Farm had the damage done to them that they had done, because they have been doing so

much to keep vegetables growing all year, which is what we need.

I'm glad government is aware of this that food security is so important, but there's more to it than just having the land available. That's the first step that has to happen. What is it? I think it's 89 per cent of our land in this province is Crown land, so we really do have to make that step. While we want to use our land for various things, walking trails for example, access to the coast is really important, but making land available to aid our food security and to aid the agricultural industry is major.

In Estimates – because I ask about this in Estimates – in 2015, we were told that 25,000 acres are currently used for agriculture. Now it may have gone up a little bit since 2015, but it wouldn't be much because we were also told in Estimates that it goes up maybe about 1,000 acres a year. And I see the Member for Labrador West writing, so he may have up-to-date figures on that.

The bottom line is we were also told – this was back in 2015 – at that Estimates that the target for food security in the province would be about 100,000 acres under cultivation, and right now we have about 25,000-26,000. So we have a long ways to go in order to get to food security. It can't happen without planning, and neither can it happen, I don't believe, by only making Crown land available.

We're talking about two things. We're talking about people who are already in the industry – and people who are already in the industry may have sometimes, maybe not all the time, the resources to access land and then begin using it right away. But if we're talking about trying to increase the numbers of farmers, and especially getting younger people involved, I think government needs to look at the start-up costs for farmers, and I think we have to become more involved when it comes to start-up costs in order to get new entrants in.

Government had the wherewithal to put money into the cranberry industry, which was great; continues to do it, I think. Governments in the past put a lot of money into mink farming. I think a lot of money that may have been wasted. But putting money into farming that's going to

increase our ability to feed ourselves, into increasing our level of food security, can never be seen as money that shouldn't be spent. It is money that should be spent, and we do have to help new entrants.

There are good programs available, but a lot more is going to have to be done. I was happy to hear the minister talk about the NL Young Farmers. We do have some wonderful young farmers in the province, couples who are working together – some have been in the news recently, and I would encourage people – I follow NL Young Farmers on Twitter and I love seeing their tweets. I love seeing it because one of things they're doing now, which I think is very important, they're sort of profiling young farmers. I think it's every week or so they're putting out the profile of another young farmer, or a young farming couple, a farming family and I really love reading the tweets and reading up the profiles that are there.

So I'm sure nearly everybody here in this House tweets and if you do, I encourage you to follow NL Young Farmers because it will keep you up to date on what's happening and also encourage us to understand how fruitful it is – and that was a pun unintended, but how fruitful it is to put money into the start-up and getting young people into farming. I think it's extremely important.

We do need to beef up our funding – again, an unintended pun, but the first word that came to my mouth – and make more money available to help. As I said, we do have some good programs, but it's not enough.

I get encouraged when I read something like this, which came from one of our young farmers, publicly – I'm sure some of you heard it. Why does he like farming? I'm my own boss. I'm outside every day and I get, to a certain extent, to dictate my own hours. It's hard work but it's very rewarding.

I think having public programs, information programs ads, for example – even that in itself would be a way that government could help; real publicity by government of what goes on in our farming industry, publicity by government of young people who are getting into farming.

I choose to follow NL Young Farmers on Twitter. A lot of people in our province don't know what Twitter is. They wouldn't know what to do to say oh, go follow NL Young Farmers. So government, I think, has to do a lot of work in making sure that people know how beneficial it is to promote our agricultural industry.

Now, I know that the cranberry industry is very successful, and I'm very happy about that. It certainly is an investment that has not been wasted. It's an investment that is really yielding profits that are important for the people who are in the industry. The development of cranberry production sites was estimated to cost in the range of \$30,000 to \$35,000 per acre of land and take from three to five years to reach a level of harvestable yields. Right now, they are reaching it; they are getting there.

I look forward to the day when they'll get into secondary processing because I think that has to be the next step. Now, the thing about cranberry industry – and I'm not downplaying it; it's really important what's happened – it's a cash crop. It's a good cash crop because it's a food cash crop, a very healthy berry; nevertheless, it is a cash crop. So we want to make sure that we're not just making our investments in the area of cash crop necessary – the canola is necessary as well, but we want to make sure that we are putting investment into the crops that need to be grown in order for use to have food security.

What government has done with the decision around the Crown lands is good, it's a first step. I'll be happy to vote for the resolution, sort of thanking or congratulating government, recognizing the importance of what government has done. I'll be happy to vote for that resolution, but there is more to be done.

One more point I'd like to raise, which is slightly different from what I've been talking about, is looking at our Crown lands from another perspective, and that is using our Crown lands to protect our coastlines and our coastal trails. That we have the ability to make sure we have a trail system that is one that is good for people from the perspective of health, people being able to walk in the fresh air around our coastlines is extremely important. It's also something which is good for tourism. A lot of people come to our province exactly to do that,

to hike, whether it's in the parks or whether it's out in the non-park land. In the Crown land area, I think we have a real opportunity to make sure that our coastlines are protected and that our coastal trails are protected.

In 2011 the government had a framework, the Coastal and Ocean Management Strategy and Policy Framework, and it spelled out the need for protection of coastal areas, green spaces and trails. The strategy noted that there were important issues related to coastal land use, including traditional access to coastal areas, protection of green space and nature trails, protection of archaeological and paleontological resources and limiting development in coastal buffer areas.

So there are two issues here. I don't think the Crown lands that would be released for agricultural purposes in any way would be land that would be causing problems with regard to our coastlines and coastal trails, but I just encourage government, as it is looking at land use, to also look at that broader land use issue as they progress with programs around the use of Crown lands.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure and an honour as always to stand here in the House of Assembly and it's especially a pleasure and honour to speak to this private Member's resolution brought forward from my friend, the MHA from Lab West.

I usually preface and say I was honoured to represent the people from the historic District of Bonavista, which is true, but I have to say agriculture goes way, way back in the District of Bonavista. It's one of the main revenue sources of our economy within that area.

I have to speak to something first before I get to meat, and I've got two or three pages here so

I'm hoping I'll get to it. I'm that passionate about agrifoods in my district that I could speak for probably two days on it. But I take exception to what the Member for CBS had to say here earlier. He gets up and says: oh, you're bringing forward PMRs which you should be embarrassed about.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not embarrassed to talk about this. On that side, they're the crowd that brought forward a PMR on Muskrat Falls, and also the PMR on the FANL fisheries fund, which they like to pontificate about these days where they talked about all the money they brought in. They threw a party and no one turned up.

So getting back to that, then you had the Member for Cape St. Francis get up and call this a scam – a scam, Mr. Speaker. If I'm not mistaken, when we got up and spoke about this in the fall, our Crown lands legislation, he was one of the ones who stood up and voted for it. So how he could get up here today and call this a scam is unbelievable.

He gets up and reads page after page after page from their Blue Book from 2015. I'd say, Mr. Speaker, those words were in vain. They had 12 years to do what they said they were going to do and didn't do it. We've been here 15 months. We put forward legislation to allow farmers to have better access to Crown land, and we did it within a year. We get results. Get out their Blue Book and read from it. I'd be ashamed to read from that.

I'm getting a little off track here. *The Way Forward* document commits to growing our food production to 20 per cent by 2022. We currently only produce 10 per cent of our own food, which currently employs 5,000 to 6,000 people each year. With our *Way Forward*, with the opportunities we're having in our agriculture industry, that's going to hopefully double by 2022.

They talk about diversification; this is a part of our diversification. We're going to grow the industry by double by 2022. That's going to see big economic growth in the agriculture industry within my district, Mr. Speaker.

I have written down here about the history of the family garden. If you're from rural Newfoundland, you always had a family garden. Going back to my parents days, their parents days, going on down. It was in the MHA for Terra Nova, so it goes back to his days, but it's part of our history. It's the way we had to grow our food years ago.

We couldn't go buy it at the grocery store. You had to grow it. You supplemented your vegetables with your salt fish, your rabbit, whatever else you caught. So if you didn't have a good harvest, if you didn't put an effort into farming in summertime, then you starved in the winter.

That gets back to our local gardens that we have now. Most of us – I wouldn't say most of us, but a few of us have our own little gardens that we tend to and I'm the same. People who follow me on Facebook can see my success or lack thereof in some things. The Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate gave me a few pointers, but I think the pointers he gave me actually stunted the growth, but that's neither here nor there.

We're seeing a prevalence of community gardens, Mr. Speaker, no matter where you go. I'm working with a group in my hometown to see if we can get some funding to get a community garden going there. What this group does as well, they go into schools, teach about composting, teach about gardening, so that our young people actually get out and do it themselves.

If you talk about the District of Bonavista, you'd be remiss not to talk about the Town of Elliston who's the root cellar capital of the world. So you look at Elliston, and it's a pretty rocky, rugged, barren area but they grew their own vegetables, stockpiled it in their root cellars, many of which are still active today, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, during the Bird Island Puffin Festival, on Saturday and Sunday they have a jiggs dinner and most of the vegetables that are supplying that jiggs dinner actually come from locally grown gardens. The vegetables were housed in root cellars during that previous winter. I can tell you, if you can go to jiggs dinners around the province, that's probably the best one you're going to go to. It's fabulous.

We talk about our food production and we talk about our history. We talk about our own little gardens because we like to have a few meals of fresh vegetables in the fall of the year. But how this PMR relates to our bill, our legislation on better access to Crown lands, is it's going to increase our production.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of farms throughout the District of Bonavista, throughout the years both in the past and present. You look at Lethbridge, Musgravetown, Bunyan's Cove, Morley's Siding, Canning's Cove, Bloomfield areas, they've had a big, big impact on the agriculture industry in this province for years and you still see those farms flourishing today.

You look at other areas in the district. You look at heading up the Bonavista Peninsula; you had a number of different farms in the Trinity Bight area. You have the Port Rexton community livestock pasture. You have the Bonavista pasture which allows for animals to graze in that area.

When you talk about the farming industry, what you've seen over the years is an aging group of farmers. What we've seen in the last few years in the District of Bonavista on the Bonavista Peninsula is a number of different young farmers come forward. You look at Krista and David Chatman who operate Three Mile Ridge Ranch –

AN HON. MEMBER: Great people.

MR. KING: Wonderful people, young people in their 30s who are growing vegetables. They're heavily involved in the Newfoundland and Labrador Farming Association.

Actually, in fact, Krista is taking the lead on part of the farmers market in Clarendville. They saw a need for the area. They wanted to get into farming, and you know what? We're doing our best to help them get what they need so that they can grow and solely focus on their farm, Mr. Speaker.

You look at Luke Strong, who started out last year in Harcourt who started growing hay. Now he's transitioning into dairy. He's only 20 years old, Mr. Speaker. So that's the future of the farming industry.

You look at Clint Keats, who just moved back from Alberta, who is going through the process now to start a bison farm on the Bonavista Peninsula – something that we haven't seen before. So it's a new product that's coming into the province. I know the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and his department is working very closely with him to make sure things roll smoothly for him. Like anything else, there are hiccups, but we're there to help him out.

Actually, in the week before last, I had a young couple, two electricians actually from Labrador came to my office, Amanda Cull and Johnny Pike, and they're looking at starting a greenhouse. They've got three greenhouses bought in the Elliston area. Now they're looking at getting into the hydroponics and actually using green energy so that they can use their greenhouses year round.

So those are just four examples of young farmers in my district who are actively there getting into the industry, and I'm certainly there to support them. I know the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources is there to support them.

You can't forget the farm stands as well – and I forgot to mention this about Krista and David of Three Mile Ridge Ranch who operate a vegetable stand as well – more than a vegetable stand; it's a country store, who my friend, the MHA for Terra Nova, buys all his horse supplies from. They operate a vegetable stand right up to Christmas. Last year, they got as far as the middle of October. This year, they've seen an expansion; they got a little bit more.

I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about Holloway's stand on Route 230 going down through Lethbridge who, given their age right now, they just got out of it, but they were there for years and you couldn't go by there in the fall of the year without seeing at least five or six cars because that's where you'd go to get your carrots and your turnips and your cabbage and whatnot.

Also in the District of Bonavista – and I have to speed up because my time's getting really short and I said I could talk to two hours on this. I probably shouldn't have given the Opposition

the gears earlier on, but I figured they deserved it.

We have award-winning producers in the dairy industry. We have Jeff and Olive Greening of Sunrise Dairy on the Bunyan's Cove and Jeff Peddle of Riverbend Dairy in Lethbridge who, year after year, are always in contention for the Dairy Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador Award of excellence. This year, they both won the award. So it's great to have that representation in the district and see the great quality product they're producing.

Mr. Speaker, Growing Forward 2 has been an asset. I know it was brought in by the previous government, so I'm going to give them kudos on that. But in the last year, we've seen hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in farms in the District of Bonavista which have helped modernized, helped farms expand. So that's a great program that's being very well utilized. Under our government, we're seeing better access and we're getting it rolled out a little bit quicker than our first year, I understand this year.

Within this document I have here, which is the reserved areas of interest for our agriculture, so that gets back to our Crown lands access and our legislation that we brought forward in November. Out of the 19 areas of interest, nine of them are from the District of Bonavista, Mr. Speaker. So I'm excited. That's going to be a big boom for our area.

I talked briefly about the farmers' market in Clarendville, and I know my friend from the District of Terra Nova has been very active with that. That's not just going to help the Clarendville region; it's actually going to go right up to the top of the peninsula in Bonavista, going to go west, you're probably going to get in as far as Gander, even Grand Falls.

I was at a local vender meeting two weeks ago and there was a jam-packed house at the Holiday Inn. It was standing room only, Mr. Speaker. So that's the interest that farmers' markets have in this day and age. Living in Halifax for 10 years, they had to expand their farmers' market from the old Alexander Keith's brewery down next to Pier 21. It was packed every weekend.

I just saw good news as well, the cider production they're looking at in Milton – now, if it's anything close to the success that Port Rexton Brewery had, I'm sure it's going to be huge. So I'm looking forward to getting a nice cold glass of cider from the guys when they actually get up and running. In Milton, you have a great area for growing apples. So that's going to be a different industry that we have there. That's more diversification, Mr. Speaker.

One last thing I want to touch on. I was going to touch on a couple other things, but one other thing that I really want to speak to is the livestock production seminar that we have at the College of the North Atlantic in Bonavista on April 20. It runs from 8:30 in the morning, starting with registration, and goes to 4:30 in the afternoon.

They were supposed to have that in February but given our weather in Newfoundland and Labrador, it had to be cancelled and rescheduled. It's on April 20. We may not get the best weather there, but I'm hoping that it's going ahead and I'm looking very much to attending that seminar. I was registered for it before and I'm glad that it's part of our Easter break so I actually get to spend some time and learn about the livestock industry here in this province and the potential that we have in our province and in the District of Bonavista.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Labrador West has my full support in this PMR and I know I'll be voting for it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise again today on this PMR to close debate. I want to thank all the Members who spoke on this today. I want to thank the Member for CBS for supporting the resolution. It is unfortunate that you would use the opportunity to really not talk about how great agriculture production is for the province. Rather, he took the time to try to, I guess, rail on

us as the Opposition for the things we're not doing to support this industry. But in essence, Mr. Speaker, we are doing a lot of good things for agriculture and this is just step one.

He acknowledges that it is a good move. Unfortunately, he didn't elaborate on that but took the time to talk about Crown lands, other things and the negative part of the whole issue. In fact, he went as far as calling it – that he was embarrassed; it's embarrassing that we're bringing this forward today.

Mr. Speaker, I am not embarrassed to do what is right for this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: And this is a great industry and has great potential for the future of this province.

I want to congratulate my colleague, the Member for St. George's – Humber. He brought a great local perspective to this PMR today, for the simple reason that agriculture is a huge part of his district. It is an industry in his district that is thriving and has so much more potential to improve. We're looking to that region of the province as one of greatest opportunities to grow the agriculture industry.

We talk about technology; he's talking about technology and robots milking cows and all that good stuff. Well, this is the age to live in; it's the age of innovation that we live in and it's good to see that is happening in his district.

The Member for the beautiful District of Cape Francis, he got up and he supports the resolution as well, but again, he took the time to really go down the same road as the Member for CBS. Rather than talk about the good things of the industry, he talked about all the good things that were in their 2015 Blue Book.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: All the things that they had, 12 years with \$25 billion in their pockets to implement, but failed to do so. Mr. Speaker, you can't support it and then in the same breath really turn against it.

The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, I'm proud today that the minister who is now in charge of Crown lands had the opportunity and the wherewithal to congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment for all the work he did when Crown lands came under his jurisdiction, to get this initiative through and to get this act through the House of Assembly so that Crown lands could be allocated to agriculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: I echo that remark by the way, because I think he put a lot of time and effort into it. I know it's too late, but anyway.

It's good to see the agriculture ministers from across Canada will be here in the very near future, in St. John's, to talk about agriculture in this country, and they recognize how important it is to this province. I want to also thank the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi who really, really saw her passion in supporting this initiative, because it's great. I'm glad she recognizes, and put the politics aside, and recognizes the impact and the benefits that agriculture will bring to this province. I applaud you, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

She asked a couple of questions – and by the way, her joke that she mentioned at the beginning of her remarks about the agriculture land and referring to Wabush, Labrador West. Well, I would like to remind the Member, we have in this policy that we're putting forward, there are 500 hectares of land –

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. LETTO: Five hundred hectares of land designated in Labrador West for agriculture production. We do have a community garden, and we've had it for years. So we can grow vegetables there.

She asked a statistic as well about, how much did we have today? Well, the 64,000 hectares we're announcing is basically doubling, but one statistic is that in Newfoundland and Labrador there are approximately 0.06 hectares of farmland per capita, which compares to the national average of 1.19 hectares per capita. So

we're about half of the national average today. We want to improve on that, and I think what we're announcing today, what we have announced with regard to Crown lands and the movement in agriculture will go a long way to do that.

My friend, the Member for Bonavista; I've always known that Bonavista was a good place to grow things, and the Bonavista Peninsula, but I didn't realize there was so much activity on that peninsula with regard to agriculture. He talked about Elliston; he talked about Lethbridge, Milton and all those other places that have so much potential – and are doing things today, by the way. There's so much agriculture going on in this province today that really very few people realize the impact it's having.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say in my closing remarks, that what this is doing today is hopefully to improve our food security in this province. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, food security is a very important matter. We're at the mercy of many factors that work against us. We don't have the best growing climate in Canada, we acknowledge that. Our climate is what it is, but we're learning to work with it, and that's where innovation and new ways of farming are coming in.

I just want to say for Labrador as well, that we're at the mercy as well. When you talk about food security, I'll relate an incident in March 2015 when stores in Southern Labrador, in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair ran out of fresh milk and produce for two weeks – two weeks – because of ice conditions in the Strait of Belle Isle.

Mr. Speaker, we have a long way to go, but I just want to say this is a great PMR today. I think it shows that we are trying to diversify the economy. We are trying to do good things for this province and we see agriculture certainly as an opportunity for us in the future, and hopefully we can get there.

I know the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi recognizes this is just step one. That's exactly what it is. Allocating the land is step one. We know we have a lot of work to do. Now that we've allocated the land we have to support

the industry, and that's what we'll do going forward. That's why The *Growing Forward 2* initiative is so important. We have to support the industry. If we're going to allow land and provide the resources then we have to support the industry and allow these farmers and other people to develop the industry that we're trying to promote.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank everybody for their input today. I want to thank everybody for their support, and I look forward to the vote that we're going to have very shortly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the vote?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

I declare the motion carried.

This being Private Members' Day, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.