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Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the public gallery today I am very pleased to welcome members of the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board who will be referenced in a Ministerial Statement.

With us today we have the Chair, Mr. David Harris, Craig Randell, Joann Greeley, Jennifer Hillier, Amanda Cull, Geordie Walsh, Tyson Hedge, Karen Rowe, Karen Walsh and Mona Morrow.

They are joined by staff members of the apprenticeship and certification division of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I would like to recognize Ms. Brenda O'Brien, who will be mentioned in a Member's statement today. She is accompanied by her daughter, Alice O'Brien.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to send out a special hello out in another gallery, to that of our television broadcast. I would like to send special greetings to Labrador and Ms. Roxanne Rose's grade three class at Peacock Primary. I was recently a guest reader at the school's Project Read. It's a week-long activity focused on reading for pleasure at home and in school. They are tuning in today as they wanted to learn a bit more about our Legislature and what their elected officials are up to.

So, greetings to the class.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: So behave.

MR. SPEAKER: Today for Members' statements, we will hear from the District of St. George's - Humber, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Placentia West - Bellevue, Cape St. Francis and Windsor Lake.

The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Verena Trask was born in the historic community of Sandy Point in Bay St. George, and this coming Monday she will be celebrating her 100th birthday.

In 1952, Verena and her husband, Isaac Trask of Elliston, moved their family to Indian Head and later relocated to Seal Cove in Stephenville Crossing to be closer to the school for their children and to become more involved in the community.

Verena and her husband – who passed away in 1983 – had 11 children. Their family has continued to grow and she now has 21 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

Verena is known by many for her kindness and she's also known as a skilled seamstress who has over the years made hundreds of dresses and suits for graduations, weddings and other special occasions.

Verena is still very active. She loves to knit, she loves to go shopping and she loves to share stories with members of her family and her many friends. Her family is very proud of her, and she is loved and respected in the community.

I ask all Members of the House to join with me in wishing Verena Trask a happy 100th birthday this coming Monday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm so pleased on International Women's Day to recognize a constituent who is the essence of the unsung heroine, as are so many women.

Wife, mother, activist Brenda O'Brien for the past 14 years has been an untiring advocate for her own son and all children on the autism spectrum. Brenda has devoted her life to working with teachers, principals and counsellors to ensure that the schools her son and other children with special needs attend are welcoming and truly inclusive.

She researches intently what can be done and engages knowledgeable with professionals in trying to attain solutions to problems, believing beyond a doubt that there is always a solution.

She has raised awareness in our educational system about the human rights of children with autism and developmental disabilities. She was instrumental in getting early intervention extended to children with autism beyond the age of six.

Brenda continues to advocate for accommodation in the school system.

I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to applaud this wonderful woman, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to recognize two young people from Marystown who, in their own ways, are shining a light on mental health.

Chloe Walsh of Little Bay is pursuing graduate studies in psychology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. But, there, her pursuit has extended beyond purely an academic quest. She is one of five students named by the university as a Future World Changer. Chloe's ambition is to make more people mindful of their mental

health, as well as normalizing the language used to describe it.

Teenager Jimmy Bonnell, of Marystown, is also making a difference. After struggling with mental health, he has transformed himself into a power of good for others. He has started the free Burin Peninsula Teen Mental Health Peer Support Group and describes it as an opportunity for people to share their personal battles with others to show them that there are brighter days ahead.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating and thanking them both and encourage anyone out there struggling to check out one of Chloe's videos or drop by one of Jimmy's sessions.

Mr. Speaker, mental health challenges have become the issue of our time. But thankfully advocates and leaders like Chloe and Jimmy are stepping forward to help #endthestigma together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate everyone involved in the 2018 Snowfest celebrations in the Towns of Flatrock and Pouch Cove. Mr. Speaker, the energy and the dedication of many volunteers made this event successful again this year.

Snowfest was filled with a variety of fun activities for all ages: family game night, seniors' social and outing, an ice fishing derby, an afternoon tea and bake sale, a hot roast beef and moose supper, bingo, general skate, a card game and dances for both children and adults.

Many local groups were involved including the recreation and heritage committees, the school council, the Lions Club, the volunteer fire department and firettes, the church and, of course, the local musicians and performers.

All activities were well organized, well attended and I know a great time was had by all. It was truly a community celebration.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating and thanking the organizers and volunteers for this year's Snowfest celebration. It was a fantastic time and a job well done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Windsor Lake.

MS. C. BENNETT: Since its inception in 2008, Smiling Land Foundation strives to spread the warm and welcoming Newfoundland and Labrador and East Coast culture and spirit to the rest of Canada. This group of ex-pat Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have raised and donated in excess of \$1.4 million to deserving charities benefiting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Daffodil Place, Ronald McDonald House, The Gathering Place, Stella's Circle, Artistic Fraud, the Vera Perlin Society, Boys & Girls Clubs of St. John's, young parents association, Rainbow Riders, Special Olympics, Health Care Foundation, the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Centre, the Home from the Sea Sealers Memorial in Elliston, LSPU Hall, Torngat Mountains Base Camp youth leadership program and Froude Avenue Community Centre – all benefactors of the work of these passionate native sons and daughters.

This year marks Smiling Land Foundation's 10th anniversary and final fundraising event for this remarkable group. Funds raised on May 12 will be used to establish a scholarship fund for Newfoundland and Labrador youth.

We are proud of your efforts and so grateful for your commitment to home. Thank you to these amazing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who, despite living away, found a unique way to help their neighbour – giving back to the province they love.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It has been a year of advancement for women. The role of the #metoo and #timesup movements in that change is recognized, as is the leadership roles women have taken.

Today the #pressforprogress continues to ensure women's rights are respected and equality assured, here and around the world.

On International Women's Day, we express our gratitude and recognize the contributions of women and girls in our province, both past and present. We acknowledge women's equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations who work to advance true equality for women and girls.

In this province progress continues as our government introduces and advances many programs and initiatives to empower, protect and advance women. I am pleased to chair a ministerial committee across government departments to oversee collective actions to address issues of violence in our province and advance equality. This is in addition to the Justice Minister's Committee to End Violence Against Women and Girls that engages community groups on this issue, as well as the tremendous work being carried out throughout the province through our violence prevention initiatives. Strengthened workplace harassment policies in the public sector have also been introduced.

Government continues to work collaboratively with industry and community organizations to advance economic opportunity. For example, we are ensuring opportunities for women in the trades and technology sectors by increasing the number of women in trades through women's employment plans and gender equity and diversity plans for large projects in the province.

In the hon. House, today and every day, let us all work together to advance true equality – social,

legal, cultural, economic and political – for all women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are all part of the human race – 52 per cent of us just want to be treated equally and respectfully. Let us all recommit today to doing just that.

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. Our caucus wishes to join with government, community leaders and society to celebrate International Women's Day. Today is the day to recognize the accomplishments of women and encourage all women to reach for the stars, stand strong in the face of adversity and follow your dreams.

Mr. Speaker, today is also a day to acknowledge the contributions of the hard-working groups who advocate for women's equality and anti-violence. To them, I give my sincere, heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

We all have inspirational women in our lives including our mothers, our sisters, our friends and female leaders the world over who have demonstrated the courage, strength and resiliency to fight for equality. I'm so proud of each and every one of you.

For today, I would especially like to thank my hon. female colleagues. While we may not always agree on policy, I respect and admire each and every one of you. Thank you for stepping up to bring female voices to the government table.

If I may modify the words of Helen Reddy: We are women, hear us roar.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister. Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, I celebrate in honour of the amazing work undertaken by all women across our province. Racialized women, women with disabilities, women in the LGBTQ two-spirited community, younger, older, rural women, immigrant women, women who helped develop the fishery, who heal our sick, feed our hungry, who raise and teach our children, keep our commerce going, who serve through elected office, feminists, equality seekers, change makers: Thank you, my sisters.

Especially, I acknowledge our indigenous sisters who today are in Happy Valley-Goose Bay telling their stories and demanding change at the inquiry for murdered and missing indigenous women. We are with them in sisterhood and we honour their courage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure today to stand and read this minister's statement.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to join a meeting of the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board earlier this morning. The meeting marks a significant milestone as it's the board's 100th meeting.

The board plays an important role in the province's apprenticeship system. Its mandate includes accrediting institutions to deliver apprenticeship programs, designating occupations for apprenticeship and providing advice to the provincial government on labour market matters related to training and certification.

I am pleased to inform my hon. colleagues of many new developments underway as we continue to work with the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board.

We recently announced online training for apprentices. The first blocks of training for five trades were selected for this pilot initiative, which will enable apprentices to continue their training while working.

We are partnering with the Maritime provinces and Manitoba on a shared IT system to streamline the steps to completing an apprenticeship program. Work is also continuing on the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project, with 10 trades already completed and six more in progress.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to collaborate with industry and our post-secondary institutions to ensure that we are responsive and meeting emerging needs in the province.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating members of the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board on their 100th meeting and commending them for their important work and their contributions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. This side of the House also congratulates the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board on its 100th meeting. The board plays a vital role in this province, enables many women and men the opportunity to progress and excel in their trades.

This is a benefit, not just to these individuals but to the economy and the province as a whole. The Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board was established in 1953, and to now see the current members reach this milestone of 100th meeting is certainly a milestone we recognize.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and join with him in congratulating the members of the Apprenticeship and Certification Board for their work in advancing apprentices through the system.

On this International Women's Day, I also congratulate the women in Resource Development Corporation and the Office to Advance Women Apprentices. Both organizations have done outstanding work helping women apprentices get jobs and move on to journey person status. They've done much to help employers appreciate the excellent skills women bring to these jobs, and I'm sure the minister will also collaborate with these organizations.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that NLC had terminated two more senior employees. The chief information officer who was terminated had been named in February as the project manager to help roll out the government's marijuana plan.

I ask the Premier: With marijuana becoming legal in a few short months, was this individual terminated with cause or without cause?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The decision by the CEO at the NLC, Mr. Speaker, was just that, a decision of the CEO of the NLC. I'm not exactly sure what the reasons for the dismissal were. I was informed of the dismissal by the CEO. We have full confidence in the CEO to run the operations of the NLC.

We do have cannabis coming on stream, and that is a very important file for us, Mr. Speaker, but I'm assured by her that this will not affect the rollout of the cannabis file.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

When a minister who has publicly stated he is very concerned about spending at agencies, boards and commissions, it takes me by surprise that he hasn't even inquired to find out if it's with cause or without cause. The implications and cost to government are significantly different.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit today to hold a public competition to fill this position or is the plan just to fill this, as you've done so many times in the last two-and-a-half years, to fill it with a Liberal friend?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's unfortunate that sometimes deep politics enters a question in Question Period; but, Mr. Speaker, what I can assure you here is that the CEO – we have asked for efficiencies within our agencies, boards and commissions. We have done restructuring of management within core government.

I understand from the CEO that these positions will not be filled at the NLC. Part of it, my understanding, is finding efficiencies at the NLC. Outside of that, if there are any other reasons or any other causes, I cannot speak to that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the information we have is the chief information officer is intended to be replaced.

Yesterday, while visiting Nova Scotia, federal Fisheries Minister LeBlanc confirmed he was standing by his decision to give a surf clam quota to the Five Nations Clam Company and he flat out has rejected calls to reverse the decision.

I ask the Premier: What is his plan now?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, we remain in close communication with not only the department but the minister himself.

I had a brief exchange yesterday with Minister LeBlanc where I reiterated our expectation of a meeting and I reiterated our expectation that the decision be rescinded. I'm looking forward to that meeting. We do know the minister has some health issues which he's dealing with, but we do expect that meeting. I will note for the benefit of the House, that the licence has not yet been issued.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the minister was, yesterday, in Nova Scotia visiting the industry and people involved with the industry there. Last week he was questioned in Parliament about his decision and Minister LeBlanc said he was very proud of the process. He also said that he was convinced that the decision is good for the industry. He said it's good in terms of benefits for indigenous communities and he said it will be good for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: What is your understanding of how the minister sees this or can he explain this, that it's good for Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, we disagree with the federal minister's characterization of this particular process. We feel it was very, very flawed.

Specific requirements were put in place through their own request for proposals process, which clearly do not seem to be followed at all. There were placeholder elements to the successful proposal.

As we know, the proposal itself was led by a non-indigenous company, Premium Seafoods out of Arichat, Cape Breton. There was one indigenous partner that was included in the original award or the advancement of the proposal. To the best of our knowledge, there were four placeholder positions for indigenous, including in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We categorically reject that as responsible behaviour within this process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm glad the minister has clarified that they're offside on this decision with the federal government. When asked for his opinion on its government's decision on surf clam quota, the regional minister, the minister from Newfoundland and Labrador, Minister Seamus O'Regan said that he believes opening up the surf clam fishery to competition is a good thing.

Clearly, no one in the federal Liberal Cabinet understands the impact of this decision on the people right here in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, not even our own representative in the federal Cabinet.

Minister O'Regan was in town this week. I ask the Premier: While he was here with other visiting ministers and meeting with his MP colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador,

was there an opportunity to meet with the minister and to express your views on this issue?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, part of the strategy of this government, of the Members on this side of the House, has been to reach out to everyone and anyone who can assist our province in advancing our interests, and that included reaching out to Minister O'Regan.

Premier Ball and I, we actually had a conversation with our regional minister where we did indeed voice our concerns, where we expressed our concerns about the process itself and the ultimate decision. We've reached out to indigenous communities; we've reached out to industry players.

I'll note also, Mr. Speaker, concern is not being raised just in this province, and this is very important for the House to reflect on. It is being expressed in other provinces as well. That's the partnerships, that's the allies we're seeking here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, Grand Bank plant depends solely on processing surf clams. It doesn't do any groundfish, scallops, shrimp or crab, just surf clams.

What assurance can you give us that all Clearwater's remaining surf clam quota will be processed in Grand Bank and not in the facility in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, we expect Grand Bank Seafoods to adhere to all provincial requirements and laws. As we know, Clearwater had taken the decision some time ago, when the hon. Member was in government, to upgrade a plant in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, and to offer

that plant for the purposes of processing surf clams.

We feel very, very strongly that we have to work together on this to ensure a better future for Grand Bank. That's why we're spending so much energy, on this side of the House, making sure that our voice is heard in Ottawa.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I'll remind the minister that the Glace Bay plant was just for the overflow at the Grand Bank plant.

In Nova Scotia yesterday, Minister LeBlanc said he understood there would be displeasure in this decision. He said it's not about hurt feelings. Well, I tell you, it's about hundreds of full-time jobs that are in jeopardy on the Burin Peninsula.

Minister, what are you doing about it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, if the Member really wants to make this about commitment, the Members from this side of the House, including the Member for Burin - Grand Bank – all the Members on this side of the House – are very, very concerned about the situation in Grand Bank.

If the Member really wants to make this about commitment, this decision was taken by the federal minister on September 6. That Member did not ask any questions in this House in October, in November or December.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BYRNE: He did not ask any questions. He did not approach me on this.

If the Member really wants to make this about commitment, then I'd ask: Did the hon. Member

communicate to the federal government his own concerns? I'd suggest he did not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I wish the minister would understand that there was a question asked on this. Now, it did happen in September. We don't open until the House until 1st of November, but it was asked in the last session on December 5 if you want to go back and have a look at it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: And before then, I also spoke to the mayor of Grand Bank about the situation down there. He was very concerned and he thought you were concerned too.

Mr. Speaker, Clearwater stated it's pursuing legal options at a possible abuse by the federal Minister LeBlanc. Minister LeBlanc stated yesterday that he was not surprised and worried about that.

At one point, Minister, you said you were going to seek a legal opinion also. Can you give us an update on that?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, what we've gotten clarification on is the hon. Member actually acknowledges that there was an additional plant that was built in Cape Breton for surf clams under his watch. While the decision was rendered in September, there was no communication by the hon. Member until the very dying days of the sitting of the House just before Christmas on December 5. Now we ask about whether or not we're offering a legal opinion.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is we are working very, very hard for the people of Grand Bank to solve the problem, as it stands with the minister and with the department. Yes, I appreciate the fact that he did take an opportunity to call the mayor of Grand Bank. The Premier and I, along with the Members of

this caucus, especially the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, have been in communication with the mayor of Grand Bank many, many times.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister should worry about this own job, as Minister of Fisheries representing Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: – for the fisheries.

Minister, the winning applicant of the quota was in Minister LeBlanc's own riding. The company that partnered with the owner is a brother of federal MP.

Do you think this is part of the flawed process too?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, the entire request for proposal process was not adhered to. When you have a company which actually appears to be the leading driver to the proposal itself, when the RFP process was supposed to be led by indigenous communities and nations – yes, Premium Seafoods does appear to be the lead driver of this particular proposal.

What we also know is that for such a valuable species, surf clams, this has been offered now to indigenous communities for three weeks. There's an offer but no buyers. I find that very, very strange and it does show that not only do we find, as a government, that the process was flawed, but many indigenous communities of Atlantic Canada and Quebec also find it flawed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard that many researchers have stopped conducting clinical trials because it's frustrating working with the Health Research Ethics Authority, denying patients of cutting-edge new medicine and treatments, as well as stifling the economic impact of less research spending in the province.

Can the minister give details of clinical trial activity in this province?

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

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

It's unfortunate that the way the question is framed leads or could lead people to think this province is not open for innovation and business, when the facts plainly speak to the opposite. We have had innovation summits. We have had technology summits. The Health Research Ethics Authority and its board are arm's-length authorities put in place to protect the people of this province under conditions of research to ensure it is safe and ethical.

I cannot, nor will I, interfere with that process. They are committed to doing it in a safe and appropriate fashion, and I would support them in that endeavour, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You may say that you're open for business here, but you're doing very little to enhance business here, particularly when it comes around medical research.

What are the time frames as it relates to the duration from submission to approval? Surely, the government must encourage a standard by which it can be judged.

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

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

The requirement is that the application for ethics approval be considered within 30 days. That timeline has been a challenge owing to vacancies on the Health Research Ethics Board, which were filled as recently as last fall.

The nature of the current problem that the Member alluded to in his previous question is simply the complexity and inherent difficulty in working through such a complicated proposal to the point where expert advice was sought and brought in and both parties have gone away to examine the results of that, Mr. Speaker. It needs to be done properly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Other jurisdictions can answer the same complex questions in two to four weeks.

Why is it we've accepted the authority here in this province to operate so far out of what is accepted as the political norms?

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

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

I would dispute the comparison with other jurisdictions. The complexity of this request and its inherent difficulties in working through it are not within the range of normal; hence, the Health Research Ethics Board desire to seek outside nationally-recognized expertise. They have advised both sides of the process, and there are meetings going ahead as we speak to deal with this issue, Mr. Speaker. It needs to be done properly for the benefit of the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sequence Bio has now been waiting over six months for something that would take less than four weeks in another province; waiting to invest hundreds of millions of dollars.

Can the minister explain why this delay is still occurring?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the absence of Hansard being that fast, Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again: this process is complicated. The timeline was met with 30 days.

There have been challenges with recruiting for the Health Research Ethics Board, which were temporary and transient and have been remedied. The application is being considered. It is complicated. Outside expertise has been brought in. Both parties have taken that expertise's advice and are now working through the process. It has to be done properly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our regulator is so badly destroying research opportunities in this province that something must be done. The *Health Research Ethics Authority Act* allows the authority to recognize Central Ethics and other certified non-profit regulators in this country.

Why hasn't the government ensured the regulator, that it is responsible for, is actually fulfilling its duties?

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

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

The role of a politician in health research ethics decisions is zero, Mr. Speaker – absolutely zero. This is an arm’s-length body for a reason.

We have seen in the past, prior to the Health Research Ethics Authority being established by the Opposition when they were in power – prior to that, there were misfortunes and unfortunate occurrences of an ethical nature which will not be repeated on my watch, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At one point the minister mentioned efforts to improve process at the Health Research Ethics Authority. Apparently the department hired a lean management consultant who looked at the body and then quit.

Can the minister confirm this?

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

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

There have been a variety of approaches by the Health Research Ethics Authority. I’m sure they would be better placed to speak to the detail of those. They have made attempts and instituted newer policies and approaches. They have brought in outside expertise, Mr. Speaker.

In this particular instance, it is a complicated case. It needs to be done properly for the benefit and safety of the people in this province. I will not interfere with the assessment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, under recent public service negotiations agreed to with NAPE, new

provisions related to severance and no-layoff clauses were introduced.

I ask the Minister of Finance: What’s the status of these provisions with negotiations with ongoing collective bargaining with other unions?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for his question. Mr. Speaker, we have instituted with our public sector negotiations with NAPE, which is now ratified, a no-layoff clause. There are protections within that that ensure the clause does not roll into future agreements and we stand by that. That’s one of the factors that we’ve ensured as we’ve moved forward.

With regard to severance, severance payments will be paid out, Mr. Speaker, to all public servants based on what they’ve earned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Precisely I’ll ask the minister: What’s the current status of negotiations with those other unions outside of NAPE, which I understand collective bargaining is continuing. What’s the status of those negotiations?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, they are ongoing. We have one current set of negotiations right now that we’re temporarily paused on with CUPE. Outside of that, they are ongoing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: The minister indicated there's a pause ongoing with CUPE in regard to negotiations.

Could he explain what that pause is, or are there issues with negotiations at this time?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The primary reason for the pause with CUPE at this particular point as regarding the no lay-off clause, we are seeking assurances from CUPE, Mr. Speaker, the same as we've sought from NAPE on the no lay-off clause, we want to ensure that the no lay-off clause does not extend into future contracts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in previous statements the minister indicated that the severance to be paid out under the NAPE collective agreement is approximately \$250 million.

I wonder if he has estimated what the total payout under severance will be with the public service with those collective agreements confirmed with the other unions.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The total severance payout, including all public servants throughout our agencies, boards and commissions at core government, bargaining, non-bargaining, management positions is less than \$600 million. Of that, Mr. Speaker, we anticipate about 35 per cent of that will come back to government through income taxes and through sales taxes. We are booking out the full amount but we do anticipate that we will receive a large portion of that back in taxes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on December 5, 2016, the Minister of Natural Resources admitted that Vale had asked for changes to the development agreement. The minister stated this is a change to what would be the project milestones.

Minister, it's now March 2018, has Vale informed you if the start of the mining will occur on December 31, 2019, as per the agreed to development agreement?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say hello to Peacock Primary who are watching us today. I thank you for joining us.

This is a very important question that has just been asked of me and I will, for the sake of the House, give a little bit of background. As we all know, Vale International has done a review of its base metals business, Mr. Speaker, and part of that review, of course, was the Voisey's Bay Project. We were hopeful, and still are, that they will go underground to extend that project.

The question, of course, speaks to whether or not Vale is continuing to think about going underground. I understand from public information they are considering streaming cobalt, Mr. Speaker, to help fund them to go underground. We are continuing to encourage them to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I certainly respect the minister talking about they're thinking about doing something, but the point here is there was an agreed-to amendment and process here agreed to, to go underground by 2019.

In August 2017, Vale announced a 60-day review of the Voisey's Bay operation. This was six months ago. I've asked the minister several times if she has received an update, but the status of the mine is still unknown.

Minister, what have been the findings of the 60-day review completed by Vale?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Vale continues to consider whether or not it can go underground. Mr. Speaker. I just advised the Member opposite, and, of course, the whole of Newfoundland and Labrador, that Vale continues to assess that opportunity. We do know they are considering streaming cobalt to help fund them go underground.

We're continuing to meet with them. I've just met with them again recently to encourage them to consider that. The impact on Vale's operations today at Voisey's Bay are that Voisey's Bay continues. This is about going underground for future opportunity.

We're continuing to talk to Vale about this. They're continuing to assess it and we're hopeful they are able to stream cobalt in order to fund it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nickel closed yesterday at \$6.06 US per pound. This is an increase since Vale announced their 60-day review, six months ago. This increase in price certainly looks at the business case for the underground mine and continues to improve.

Minister, what was the last update you received from Vale? When did you obtain it? Why isn't this moving forward?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I met with Vale this week at PDAC. We are continuing to meet with them to encourage them to go underground at Voisey's Bay. This is important to the Nunatsiavut Government, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and, of course, to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Vale has indicated, as I've said, they are looking to stream cobalt. Cobalt, as a commodity, is very much in demand these days. They're looking to stream cobalt to help fund them go underground. They're continuing to work that end.

We understand and know that there's an incredible resource underground at Voisey's Bay. We think that Vale will note that and will move forward.

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 government for its stated commitment to improving the status of women in this province; however, it being International Women's Day, there are still some outstanding issues.

Last year on International Women's Day, I presented a private Member's motion asking government to start the process to enact pay equity legislation. The motion passed unanimously. The gender pay gap in Newfoundland and Labrador is still one of the worst in Canada.

I ask the Premier: Where is his pay equity legislation? The women of the province are awaiting his promise.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Human Resource Secretariat.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government values diversity in the workplace. We are an equal opportunity employer. We ensure that throughout core government, Mr. Speaker. We brought in a policy just a couple of weeks ago regarding harassment. We are looking at legislation to ensure that all individuals in this province feel safe in the workplace, safe and free of harassment.

Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent of our core government right now is female, 50 per cent male. Within the public service in its entirety, I believe 58 per cent are female.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I was asking about pay equity. Women in Newfoundland and Labrador make 69 cents for every dollar that a man makes.

Mr. Speaker, last fall, following the In Her Name vigil for missing and murdered women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women, and a coalition of anti-violence groups, urgently called for a provincial task force on gender-based violence.

This week again I spoke to many of these groups around the province and they still urgently call for this crucial task force. Women at the minister's own Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls also urgently called for this task force.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to immediately striking a task force that is so clearly needed to comprehensively address the issue of violence against women and girls?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite. I'm very happy to be able to stand and

talk about the meeting that we had back in December with the ministerial committee regarding violence against women and girls. It's a meeting that was represented by groups from all over this province, and in fact, by Members from all sides of this House. It was a very good opportunity for everybody to come together – indigenous groups, law enforcement, social advocacy groups, and for us to have a chat about some very frank and real issues that women face in this province.

What I would say is that it was a very honest and a very truthful meeting. Out of that, there were roughly 2,000 thoughts and ideas that were put forward. Just yesterday, we announced a steering committee that are going to take this and move forward with some of the systemic issues, but I'm also happy to announce that we have concrete action and legislation coming forward to combat these issues.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the women of the province are calling for a task force because of the urgency of this problem.

Mr. Speaker, affordable child care is a foundational piece in lifting and keeping women out of poverty, keeping women in the workforce, improving the economy and it is beneficial to our children. Despite some additional funding, the cost of child care is still prohibitive in this province.

I ask the Premier: On behalf of the working families of Newfoundland and Labrador, on this International Women's Day, will he commit to advocating with this federal counterparts in Ottawa for a national, universal, affordable, public, quality child care system where no child is left behind?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I just want to point to some of the initiatives that we have had in the last year have been well beyond what has been done in previous years for early childhood education. In the last budget, we had an additional \$3.3 million for two things: to increase wages for early childhood educators through the supplement program. We also changed the threshold for families qualifying for a child care subsidy. That was the first change in 10 years.

We have since changed it again with \$22 million that we have gotten from the federal government. So over a three-year period, we will see some \$32 million of additional funds for early childhood education. That is a massive investment in comparison to what was done previously, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Where is the Domestic Violence Court he promised to the people of Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for a quick response.

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

We have, within my mandate letter, a promise to take the family violence court and to spread it all over this province, and that's something we're working on. So it is something that's going to happen, but there are also many other positive things that are happening including – and I'm looking forward to this. Our Premier will be introducing Bill 1 in this House in the very near future and that's regarding the *Family Violence Protection Act*. We're going to take it and make it better.

Thank you

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Oral Question has ended.

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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), I move that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 12.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of my district. Mutton Bay Bridge, located in the Trepassey area, is approximately 50 years old. In 2015, an inspection identified significant structural issues with both the substructure and superstructure portions of the bridge. This inspection urgently recommended full replacement or significant maintenance and repair.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To immediately address this most serious issue that impacts the lives and safety of the travelling public and make it a priority for the upcoming construction season.

Mr. Speaker, I have, on occasion, presented similar petitions here in the House in regard to this piece of infrastructure on Route 10 before the entrance to Trepassey. Just to view it driving over causes concerns to many of the travelling public related to the rails. The concrete rails off

the structure itself looks in disrepair. As I said, the 2015 report indicated immediate rehab to that piece of infrastructure.

Last fall, I do believe, when the Department of TW asked for feedback on their ongoing five-year Roads Plan, I did write the minister and indicated this was of concern to the region. I asked that an assessment be done and immediate repairs be undertaken for this piece of infrastructure.

When the new roads program was announced a little while ago, there was no reference to it. I did ask the department again: Was there an error here? This was missed. They checked into it.

I did receive a letter just recently that this is not part of the roads program, which is of grave concern to the region and the people in the area. As I said, it has been indicated in 2015 that repair needed to be done. It's certainly unfortunate that this wasn't recognized in the roads program.

One of the challenges with that is there's no rating with it. In that roads program is the infrastructure that's going to be done, but it's not rated with other work that's not being done to see what truly is the most significant piece of infrastructure in regard to rating that needs to be done. That's unfortunate.

I do call on the minister and government to revisit this, get immediate maintenance done on it and look at replacing this bridge in the upcoming construction season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works for a response, please.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the petition. Mr. Speaker, last year this government, for the first time, I think, in the history of governments, brought in a five-year Roads Plan with rolling numbers. Back in early February we released this year's plan, which 100 per cent of the work we're going to do this year and 75 per cent we're going to do next year.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting because in the 2014 Auditor General's report it was clearly pointed out that from 2003 to 2014 bridge rehabilitation or any projects in this province were never ranked, they were done in a political nature. One of the things with our new ranking system is we are able now to go out and look at – and without a doubt we have major bridge issues in this province. Around 50 per cent of our bridges now are over 50 years old. The reality is, if we could fix every one of the bridge problems that we have in the deficit of bridge infrastructure in this province today, it would cost half a billion dollars.

The bridge issues we're facing today were something that should have been addressed much stronger when oil was at \$150 a barrel. Mr. Speaker, we realize the significant safety issues around bridges, our staff constantly are monitoring bridges and it's a very important topic for us and I do assure the hon. Member that bridges like the one he's referring to are certainly on our radar.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to present this petition on behalf of the residents of my district.

In our province, there are numerous encounters between bicycles and motor vehicles. Some of these have been fatal. Bicycles are already protected on our roadways, and are considered to have the same rights as motor vehicles according to the *Highway Traffic Act*. However, there is no clear definition of how a car should approach someone riding their bike. A one-metre law would erase any confusion. This law would prohibit drivers from passing anyone travelling on their bicycle in the same direction, unless there is at least one metre of open space between the vehicle and the bicycle.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows:

We, the undersigned, urge the House of Assembly to urge the government to help save lives of vulnerable bicyclists using the roadways in our province and implement a one-metre law in our province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a law that's already in existence in many jurisdictions across our country such as Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, as well as 27 states in the United States and in many other countries as well.

One of the big benefactors of a bicycle, of course, is it encourages people to get out in our province and exercise, and it has a great, positive environmental effect as well. Another thing that we would also like to point out is bicycling is a great way to tour our province, so we would like our tourists to feel much safer if they knew this law was in existence.

This is an excellent and clear definition with the one-metre law as to how somebody could approach a bicycle and safely pass them.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL for a response.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for Mount Pearl North for bringing that to the House of Assembly. I'd just like to inform him that we're actively working on the one-metre law.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Bell Island ferry provides a vital transportation link; and

WHEREAS the Bell Island ferry is only eight minutes from port at any given time; and

WHEREAS government's recent implementation policy related to mandatory existing of vehicles will put people at higher risk of injury than possibly of having to evacuate the vehicle in case of an emergency; and

WHEREAS Transport Canada regulations do not require individuals to exist their vehicles during this commute;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to conduct a full and thorough risk assessment to clearly identify all risks and liabilities associated with such a policy decision, after which will publicly release any and all results from the details of review.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to this yesterday and numerous times. No doubt, the minister will respond as he did yesterday but I need to clarify a few things. This is not about anybody saying that we're in favour of safety; it's the opposite. We're talking about realistically doing due diligence, and not everything fits in a cookie-cutter process here. There are large and small vessels. There are ones that spend much longer periods of time at sea that are more vulnerable.

In this case, what we're talking about, we have a vulnerable sector. We're not saying everybody stays in their vehicles. Those who have serious medical issues that have been diagnosed and doctors have already given notes – doctors don't give notes flippantly, particularly specialists and surgeons when they say this client or this patient must have the following treatments or supports to be able to ensure that the procedures they had are in the best interests of them being able to recover, or other people who are facing certain medical challenges.

We have an ambulance that gets on the ferry. I'm just trying to bring people up – and I'll do this for the next few weeks or so. An ambulance gets on, the ambulance attendants can stay in and the person in the back of that may have gone

over for an X-ray. We have somebody who had surgery on a leg, had pins put in it, but there's no ambulance available – because keeping in mind we have limited abilities here with red alerts in the St. John's area for an ambulance to be deployed to go to Bell Island, or an ambulance from Bell Island to be sent to St. John's to pick up there.

In due diligence, that person, once they're secure in their van or the car with an attendant, could very easily then stay in that vehicle. If indeed an evacuation had to take place, we're talking 10 to 12 steps to get upstairs. In most cases with the vessels here, we don't have the capacity in the lounges to be able to attend to their needs, keeping in mind in most cases the elevator takes them to a lounge which they have to walk, or be moved a further distance to get to the muster station.

So when you talk about safety and use that as a big umbrella thing, you really have to look at the safety of the individual who is being transported here. We're talking about not the general public, not the David Brazils or anybody else of the world who can get up and get to the muster station, the small percentage who are at more risk by having to try to get up there in an environment that is not conducive for their well-being. That has a real, detrimental effect on them.

There are horror stories that I will share with this House over the next number of weeks about how this new policy does not work in the best interest of the people, particularly those with medical issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the petition again.

Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate some of the points I stated yesterday with reference to – this policy is consistent with all interprovincial ferries as to

what you would find on the Fogo Island run, the Long Island run, any of the ferries in the province that have a roll-on, roll-off service.

What I can assure the hon. Member is the independent process is – we're doing the RFP process now and we expect the results of this in the next few weeks. One of the things this independent third party assessment will look at are the concerns that the Member just raised with regard to medical and other issues.

I can assure the hon. Member opposite that when we do this assessment there will be vessel visits, interviews with passengers and staff. We will also consult with Transport Canada, our classification societies and inclusionNL, Mr. Speaker. So it's important to us, safety is important, but we'll await the results of the independent assessment.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, Order 3, third reading of Bill 35.

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 35, An Act To Amend The Public Inquiries Act, 2006, be now read a third time.

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

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

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

I was happy to participate in the debate on Bill 35 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – An Act to Amend the Legal Aid Act.

I would like to stress once again my acknowledgement of the incredibly wonderful work, the excellent work done by our Legal Aid lawyers across the province on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would also, Mr. Speaker, like to stress once again that it was only last July that the provincial director of Legal Aid stated emphatically, absolutely emphatically in the media about the lack of resources in terms of the increase in cases that are coming to the Newfoundland and Labrador Legal Aid system, and he is having to turn away cases that they would normally accept but couldn't because of the high volume of people across the province looking for help through Legal Aid.

So we have people who cannot afford coverage in the private bar who will go to Legal Aid to ensure they have justice, that they are covered by the Legal Aid –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK (Barnes): (Inaudible) on the Order Paper.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: This is 35.

MR. SPEAKER: Please proceed.

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

We have folks in Newfoundland and Labrador who should be eligible for legal aid assistance; however, because of the increased volume and the work and the cases coming to Legal Aid for assistance, some people now –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, should I continue or should I wait? Are we –?

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible) public inquiries act.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. SPEAKER: I may have to draw relevance.

MS. ROGERS: Wrong bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

MS. ROGERS: Right Chamber, wrong bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: All right, we're good?

Is the House ready for the question?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition regarding third reading of Bill 35.

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Maybe if a take a few moments to make some comments, maybe my hon. colleague might – I think she probably does want to speak to Bill 35, but now she'll get a couple of minutes to reorganize her thoughts. It's Thursday afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 35 is a bill to amend the *Public Inquiries Act*. There has been a fair bit of discussion in second reading and there was also discussion in Committee as well.

In Committee I asked the minister a number of questions and it very quickly became a discussion beyond what is actually contained in the act. We talked about the mechanics of what's going to take place and how it's going to function after it's implemented, and it pertains to privilege.

Just so we're all on the same page, Mr. Speaker, the Explanatory Notes says the "Bill would amend the *Public Inquiries Act, 2006* to confirm that immunity or privilege is not waived where the Crown or a person designated by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council discloses information to a commission or inquiry."

The bill adds three sections. It says, “Where the Crown or a person designated ... discloses to a commission or inquiry, either voluntarily or in response to a request or summons, any information over which immunity or privilege, including solicitor-client privilege, is asserted, the immunity or privilege is not waived or defeated for any purpose by the disclosure.”

Section (2) goes on to say, the “commission or inquiry determines that it is necessary to disclose information over which the Crown or a person designated under subsection (3)” – which I just read – “asserts immunity or privilege, including solicitor-client privilege, the immunity or privilege is not waived or defeated”

So the question became – and I read this several times and did a fair bit of consulting with people in the legal community and people who have knowledge on public inquiries and experience with public inquiries. I said: What does this mean to you? What does this bill actually do?

It confirms that privilege. If it's Cabinet privilege, if it's solicitor-client privilege, if there's some sort of privilege because a contractor, in the case of the upcoming inquiry, has claimed some type of privilege, then what this says is that it's not waived by giving it to the Commission. If the Commission wants to use it, it's still not waived. The default returns to the Crown, to the government, or the client to waive that privilege. The minister clarified that it's the client who holds privilege and it's up to the client if they want to waive privilege or not.

Mr. Speaker, in discussing with the minister how that's going to take place, we pointed out some comparisons. For example, I said to the minister under the *Access to Information and the Protection of Privacy Act* if a citizen of the province files an access to information request, say, from a government department, and then the government responds as required under access to information, but doesn't provide information, claims privilege exists or some other reason for not providing it, then the applicant can go to an independent third party and ask that it be reviewed. The office of the Privacy Commissioner can actually ask for the documents, review the documents and determine if government had acted appropriately or not.

What we have in this bill is different from that type of independent process. What will happen as a result of this bill is that deciding if they're going to release privilege or not will fall back strictly to the government. One of the issues we raised was about the ability – I'm not suggesting government is going to do this, it's going to be in legislation, but a government could decide to treat different documents differently depending on their origin or on the impact of disclosure of those documents.

When I asked the minister what the process will be, he said there will be a determination later on what will be waived and what will not. When I asked him what the process will be, he said: I can't say what process will be followed. That was his words as I made note of them. During debate he said: I can't say what process will be followed. Mr. Speaker, that's important for us to understand exactly what the impact and effect of the bill will be. That's why we asked a considerable amount of questions on it during Committee.

That leaves us with a problem because as legislators we have a responsibility to vote on all bills. We either vote for it, we vote against it and during the process of debate here in this House, we also have an option to present or propose amendments. We didn't feel it was appropriate to bring forward an amendment. We didn't clearly understand exactly the outcomes and how much detail the government knew or didn't know until we got to Committee and was able to engage in a back and forth, as happens in the Committee process, with the minister. It wasn't until we got later in that process that we actually learned that the minister can't say, doesn't know what the process will be to be followed. So that creates a problem because it doesn't allow for a third-party, independent process.

If the minister was to say we're going to make sure that the commissioner – the commissioner is a highly respected, experienced lawyer and judge in this province. We put a tremendous amount respect and trust in him, as we should. If it was up to him to say well, you know a lot about solicitor-client privilege and the laws surrounding it, if it was to be left to the commissioner to make the determination, it would give us a higher level of comfort.

If it was a process put in place whereby someone, a third party, for example the Privacy Commissioner who is also a lawyer, well-respected lawyer in this province and knowledgeable on matters of privilege and access to information and protection of privacy and so on, maybe if we left it as is in the ATIPP legislation, *Access to Information and Protect of Privacy Act* that exists today, if that kind of process was added to this, that would give us a level of comfort as well.

I did attend the briefing. We actually had two briefings where Members of the Opposition staff were in place. We requested a second briefing because we still weren't clear of the potential implications of this bill. We had further discussion and understanding. My understanding from those briefings is that the government, while the intention is not for it to happen, they could essentially cherry-pick aspects of a privileged document to waive privilege on but not the entire document.

They could look at a document from 2006 and evaluate that in a way that's inconsistent with a document from 2017, as an example, but that's not the intention of this and I respect that's not the intention of it. The thing is there are no safeguards to judge that process, to evaluate that process on how that should take place.

So that's where we had some problems with this. I've expressed my appreciation and thanks during debate a number of times now to staff and the minister for allowing the briefings that took place. I appreciate the minister's efforts to get up and provide answers to questions; even though they were answers he got up and he couldn't say what the process was, which was a fundamental question for us.

We believe the bill, in the Committee phase of the bill, in discussion that took place, it's clear that the bill is about waiving privilege which has an implication to access to information and protection of privacy. Under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, it has a stipulation under section 112 where a minister and a department is supposed to consult with the Privacy Commissioner.

The minister has defended that strongly and doesn't accept our point of view on that. Fair

enough, that he doesn't, but I also refer to the most recent annual report by the Privacy Commissioner where he acknowledges that departments can't always anticipate the potential for impacts and that he encouraged them in his annual report to say consult with me anyway.

I spoke to the Privacy commissioner and understood that he very quickly could determine if there was or was not a reason for the Privacy Commissioner to look at it more in-depth. He could sometimes figure that out very, very quickly, but he encouraged anyway that government should reach out. The Privacy Commissioner did respond, his office did respond to us and confirm that they hadn't been consulted on this particular act. We just felt that was something the government could do, to consult with the Privacy Commissioner, especially when it's laid out in the act. We would assert that it says that it's required to be done.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of issues on that. Again, that was a concern for us. We've outlined those in Committee. I wanted to take the opportunity in third reading to do that again and I expect that some colleagues may express some of their views as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a moment but I do want to piggyback on the comments made by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I asked some questions in Committee as well and I had some concerns. The minister, there were some things he couldn't answer. He did indicate to me that I would get the answers before we got into third reading. As a matter of fact yesterday he said you should receive an email from my department this afternoon. I never did get an email. I never did get any answers to the questions that I had as well, so I just want to reiterate those concerns.

I guess, similar to what the Leader of the Official Opposition said – and I can understand where he is coming from, and he makes some valid points I believe. My concerns are perhaps less about the department because the departments are guided by the minister. Given the fact that Muskrat Falls was sanctioned and so on by the previous administration, given the comment from the minister in discussion where he was saying: Oh, you have no worries; we're going to put all the information out there – and he said it in a tone as if to say: Don't worry, we're not covering up anything because we want to get it all out there, particularly if you were the guys who sanctioned the project.

I have less concern about information not coming from there, as I do from Nalcor. I guess the points that the minister just made around the release of information and when privilege is going to be claimed and so on, I have the same concerns but my concerns are even more so when it comes to Nalcor. Who's going to be saying to Nalcor we want to make sure you release all the information?

One could argue we have a new CEO and we have a new board but, then again, this new CEO and new board are the people that would not release the information on embedded contractors, even though the Premier said it didn't pass his smell test. Even though the Privacy Commissioner, when he looked at that issue, from what I could read in his decision he basically said that he could see nothing wrong with releasing the information on the embedded contractors. If the embedded contractors had been employed by the Department of Natural Resources, under ATIPPA he would say: Yes, go ahead, release it; there's no harm. Because of the *Energy Corporation Act*, which is an issue in itself, the CEO could basically say: No b'y, we're not releasing any of it. Even though I would suggest there was no harm in releasing it. That's the new CEO.

The new CEO and the new board said we're not releasing information. Not the old board, not the old CEO, the new one. If he's not releasing information, such as the information on the embedded contractors, stuff that the Privacy Commissioner seemed to have no problem with, stuff the Premier of the province had no problem with, well then, how can we have assurances

that when we get to the real good stuff potentially and controversial stuff and everything else – how can we have confidence that the CEO and board of Nalcor are going to take the same approach as the Minister of Justice, as he's going to take and say: Let it all go. We want to get it all out there.

Will Nalcor have that same attitude about we want to get it all out there? Will they? I don't know. I'm less confident that they're going to want to do it as I am for the minister when he says he wants to do it. Under this process, as the Member for the Official Opposition has said, it's going to be totally up to Nalcor. Nalcor could cherry-pick and there's nothing there to say that the commissioner has any say in it. There's no Privacy Commissioner involved here, nothing. They could say, no, we're claiming privilege, and there's no independent party.

Nalcor can say here are all the files, but when they get the files and the Commissioner says I want this, this, this and this, Nalcor can say, no, you can't have this piece. The same as the Department of Justice (inaudible) say, no, you can't have this piece, that's detrimental to the overall good of the province. Well, Nalcor can say the same thing and there's nobody to adjudicate that decision.

The Commissioner can't say: no, b'y, that's foolishness, there's no reason why this can't be part of the inquiry. They can say: no, privilege, and there's no independent person or body to say no, b'y, that's ridiculous, there's no privilege here, there's no harm in releasing this. That's a concern.

Now, I'm not saying that's going to happen; I have no idea what's going to happen. I suppose the problem is we all have to take it on blind faith that everybody is going to want to release everything possible and there's going to be no cherry-picking and it's all going to be done properly. We have to take it on faith that that's going to happen. I guess that's the concern the Official Opposition has, and I would share that concern.

At the end of the day, I do understand the principle of what the Minister of Justice is saying in this bill. I totally get that, that we can't just simply say take all the files and waive all

the privilege and then there's a piece of information in there that has nothing to do with the inquiry but it's detrimental to the province. We want to be able to protect that. I understand that, it makes total sense. I get it, but the piece about stuff that is related and really shouldn't be considered privilege, there's nobody to adjudicate those grey areas; nobody adjudicates the grey areas.

We have to take it for granted that the ministers are not going to claim privilege. They're going to let everything go through as much as possible and only claim privilege when it's absolutely detrimental and not related. I have confidence, as I said, that they will do that, but we also have to have faith that Nalcor is going to do the exact same thing, and there are no guarantees. There's no process in place to ensure that's going to happen. At least not one that the minister could tell us about, because he was asked about it and he said he didn't know.

I will be voting, as I said, for this because we need to get this inquiry moving. We need to get this done. I understand and I agree in principle what the bill is all about, but I do want to reiterate the point that I made in Committee, that the Leader of the Official Opposition and other Members made, that there are still potentials – not saying it's going to happen but potentials there, there are little loopholes there and potential – that certain pieces of information that probably should have come out, may not come out. That's a concern for me but, as I said, I will be voting for the bill.

Thank you.

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

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

I will endeavour to speak to the appropriate bill this time.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

Although I was getting going there on the *Legal Aid Act*, but since that's not the act we are

debating right now – in fact, we are debating Bill 35, An Act to Amend the Public Inquiries Act, 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I think it was a very good debate that we did have on this act. I believe more of us now in the House, as a result of that debate, really understand what government was trying to achieve in this act in order to help the Commissioner, Justice Richard LeBlanc and his team, to be able to do the best work that they possibly can for the people of the province without compromising any of our very foundational pieces; for instance, solicitor-client privilege that part of our justice system is based on. I appreciate that.

The one issue I did want to raise, Mr. Speaker, is that I find it unfortunate. Although the minister a number of times said he was not required by law to take his bill to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, I understand that. There probably would have been, perhaps, some basis with section 112 of the ATIPPA; however, it's not absolutely definitive.

I do want to register that I think it's unfortunate that because of the serious nature of this bill and because of the very serious nature of the inquiry on Muskrat Falls, which people all over the province will be watching closely – because of the environment in which we find ourselves, as I said in debate the other day, the zeitgeist in which we find ourselves, because of the suspicion that lays over the whole process of Muskrat Falls which has then spilled over to many people's dissatisfaction with government and an increasing distrust, mistrust in government and how decisions are made; that whole area of perceived, rightfully or wrongfully, that sense of suspicion, lack of transparency and lack of accountability – I do think it would have been wise for government, although they are not specifically legislated to have brought this piece of legislation to the Privacy Commissioner, I do believe it would have been a good faith gesture to have formally presented it to the Commissioner to ask him and his team to apply their particular expertise to this bill.

That's basically what I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker. Again, not absolutely required by law, but I do believe in this current environment and

when Muskrat Falls really is also about accountability, transparency, the inquiry, it's about transparency and accountability and trying to re-establish the people's confidence in government, in our democratic process, I think it would have been a wise thing to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just take a few moments to address the bill we're on right now, which is the bill, An Act to Amend the Public Inquiries Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill was put before the House, and you've heard my hon. colleagues in this House talk about the seriousness of this bill. This bill was brought forward at the request of the commissioners who are commencing the work around the public inquiry around Muskrat Falls. They wanted to ensure their work had progressed as expeditiously as possible. They've asked for this amendment, which is, by the way, supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador's Privacy Commissioner, who actually agrees that it's appropriate for the Muskrat Falls Inquiry to be exempt from the freedom of information act. He thought that was appropriate. It's appropriate in two other provinces concerning inquiries. I think it's BC and Ontario; they have this type of law as well, Mr. Speaker.

This would allow the public inquiry into the Muskrat Falls Project to progress efficiently and effectively. It will ensure that a maximum amount of information, especially information around solicitor-client privilege is provided. It's exceptionally important, Mr. Speaker, that the process for the inquiry is allowed to move forward.

If memory serves, I believe the Privacy Commissioner did indicate that this is really a temporary measure, Mr. Speaker, because the inquiry records will be subject to access to information following its conclusion.

I'm going to say that again, Mr. Speaker. Following the conclusion of the inquiry, all of this information is subject to the access to

information law. That's what we understand, Mr. Speaker. That's what's been made public even by the Privacy Commissioner himself.

I will take my seat to allow the process to continue.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Public Inquires Act, 2006. (Bill 35)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Public Inquires Act, 2006," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 35)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from Orders of the Day, 2(a) resolution and Bill 36 respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health of Community Service, that the House do resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to consider the

resolution and Bill 36 respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty.

Thank you very much.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 36.

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, 2019 the sum of \$2,806,552,200."

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

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

It's indeed a pleasure to get up again here today and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis; not only the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis but the beautiful people who live in it.

Mr. Chair, it's coming on 10 years now. It's been a long while here in the House of Assembly and I've seen a lot of changes, seen a

lot of different faces. Actually, I was thinking this morning, I think it's five Premiers in only 10 years. To the new people who are here in the House of Assembly, there are changes happening here all the time; five Premiers in 10 years.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Four by us, there's no doubt, but there are a lot of changes. Do you know what? A day in politics is like a life. It's a statement that people make all the time about politics.

Do you know something? I'm very proud of the 10 years that I've been here. I'm very proud and I'm very happy that the people in my district have given me the support to be able to be here and give me the encouragement and stuff like that.

The job we do sometimes – I laugh, people will always make this comment, and I'm sure every Member in this House of Assembly will agree with me. Once the House opens, you'll run into one of your constituents, they'll say: You're finally going to work. It starts on Monday. Your House opens Monday, so you go back to work now Monday, do you? I find it funny.

For the people out listening to this today, I can assure you that not only the Members on this side here, but everybody, we work a lot of hours and do a lot of stuff. I know everybody has the right mindset and have the concerns of their constituents in their hearts. While we will argue and disagree sometimes, I think it's important that we all respect each other and respect the job that people are doing. Differences of opinions are what happen every day. It happens in our families. It happens at home. It happens on the playground. It happens on the ice. It'll happen everywhere. I know that in particular on the ice there, Mr. Chair. It happened a good few times to me that a lot of people didn't agree with what I was doing.

For the people at home, just to let you know, this is an opportunity that every MHA has, to get on their feet and – basically, this is a money bill. It's called Interim Supply. Government needs to pass this bill because there will be a time between when the year ends and when the

actually budget comes in that government needs money to pay the bills. So we need to make sure that this bill gets passed.

It's an amount of money that will be passed and will be put back into the Treasury so that everybody's salary is paid and all our public servants are paid. There will be bills out there that, I guess, government – whether it's the light bill or other bills – will have to pay. So Interim Supply gives you the time frame to make sure that the money is there for the bills as part of a budget.

Now, this is also a part of the total budget that we will use for 2018 to 2019 next year. So that's the reason why we need to do Interim Supply.

I'm going to just go back, and like I said first when I started, I've been here for almost 10 years. There are a lot of things that are after being done in my district. I'm going to talk about my district. I'm very fortunate that I do live – and I really say this – close St. John's. My district is not something like what you live in, Mr. Chair, where the district is vast. It takes you two or three hours to get from end to the other end.

My district is 25 kilometres long. I live right in the middle of it. I can go one way, I can go to Pouch Cove and Bauline –

AN HON. MEMBER: You're lucky.

MR. K. PARSONS: I am very lucky.

I can go to Torbay and Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, so I'm very fortunate. I really do appreciate – but I also say to some of the Members that I probably attend a lot more stuff because – no fault to any Member who is living in rural Newfoundland, I don't know how you do it sometimes. I get to go to council meetings on Monday night. I go to recreational meetings on Wednesday night. I go down to the Jack Byrne Arena on another night and stuff like that. So it's pretty busy, what I've been doing, but I've enjoyed every bit of it. I have to say that.

I'm just going to mention a few things that were done in my district because it's always a comment, on both sides, how government spends its money. I know in the '80s and '90s

we always talk about a deficit. I think in the years of the '80s and '90s and early 2000s, the deficit was more or less an infrastructure deficit. When I look back and see what was done in my area, I'm going to start off with a community in my district: Bauline.

When I first got elected, I went down to a meeting in Bauline and we sat in the United Church, in the pews, while they had a public meeting because there was nowhere in the community to have that meeting. Also, the town council office was a small apartment, was just a rental. It was in the kitchen of this small apartment where the kitchen table was more or less the council chambers.

In Bauline today, they have an absolutely beautiful community centre. The community centre is booked solid. I talked to a guy yesterday and he said every weekend this coming summer there's a wedding. It's huge for the community. I was down just a couple of weeks ago to Bic & The Ballpoints. They played down there. What a time it was. Everybody was out from the community. There were people there in their late eighties to their early twenties. It was a real community spirit thing.

I believe that is such a great investment in our communities, being able to bring people together. This was an investment that we made as a government. This is where we spent some money in Bauline. In Bauline also we did some work down there on the roads. Recreation – they never had a playground in Bauline and now they have a small one. I think one of the local companies – I'm not sure which one it is, so I'm not going to name it – gave a huge donation, plus we had \$15,000 grant and now they have a nice playground in that community. That's just one community.

The next community I'm going to talk about is in Pouch Cove. There were a lot of different issues in Pouch Cove. I mean not everything can get done at once and there are still issues down there with the water. And I'm going to thank the government across the way because Pouch Cove right now in the next couple of weeks, I think the tractors and that are on the way for a new water treatment and what it is, it's going to a filtration system that they're going to be able to put in the front of their plant. I don't know if

anybody remembers some of the things they saw in the news with the dirty water and all that.

It's a huge investment by government, but there was a lot of preliminary stuff that was done by our government to get all the engineering and all that. It was a huge investment. It's almost \$4 million, but it will bring clean, safe, drinking water to that community. The community is about 2,100 people, so it's very important to everyone in that community – great investment.

They had a problem down there with a lift station. I remember the problem was for years. We went down one day and had a look at it. The Department of Municipal Affairs, I really have to give them credit on this. The guy went down and said: Kevin, we got to put that in. They put it in as a priority in my district and we ended up getting that done. It was like \$300,000 just to get that fixed alone.

They had upgrades in their recreation. They got a nice ball field down there now. There are some really good upgrades. There's a women's league down there. There's a senior men's league. I get the chance to go down every now and then hit the ball – not very far like I used to be able to one time, but I get on base a few times down there. It's a great place to play a game of ball. One time, I could get it out over the fence. Now if I get it out over the infield, I'm very, very happy.

Anyway, it's a good investment. Right now there's a kid's program. I know I listened to the Health Minister and we talk about health care in our province, I think the more active that our people are, the healthier our people will be. All these are great investments in making sure that people are healthy and healthier.

I'm going to move on now to the Town of Flatrock. In my community in Flatrock, we had an old school down there that was going to be torn down. The former mayor and real good friend of mine, Kevin Butt who has passed on since then and we were great friends, two of us – when I was running for mayor of Flatrock, I went to his house and said the only way I'm going to run is if you run, and he decided to run. Then when I became an MHA, he had to move on for mayor and he wasn't in for that at all. Anyway, he did a great job and he did a lot of

work on our new community centre that we have down there now. It's absolutely beautiful that everybody comes in. Again, it's booked solid. There are young people. There are karate classes down there. There's a 50-plus club down there. There are exercise classes during the daytime for our seniors. There are all kinds of different things, and that's a good investment. Those are all good investments.

Mr. Chair, while I really want to stay positive on all the stuff that's being done, and I'm going to get up again a couple of more times because I have a couple more communities to go through, and I want to talk about the investments that were made because when these investments were made, I wasn't drunk. I wasn't drunk.

AN HON. MEMBER: No?

MR. K. PARSONS: No, I wasn't. I wasn't a drunken sailor like what was said beforehand: You're a drunken sailor. I believe that these investments are huge for our people. I believe that our province had a deficit but the deficit was more on infrastructure. I'm going to talk again, when I get a chance to get up, about other investments that were done in schools, in fire protection. I can talk about the Jack Byrne Arena, and I'm going to the bypass road in Torbay. These are all good investments that were made by sober people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly don't think that the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis was drunk when he made any of those investments. That's not what they're referring to. He was very nice today actually, but I have to go back to yesterday when the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune was up with the rhetoric that was spewing. I mean, I got up here today and tried to change the dial because there are so many good things happening in this province. There are so many good things happening in this province and we have to stop the rhetoric, stop believing the doom and gloom

because we do have a bright future in Newfoundland and Labrador and, hopefully, today I will tell you some of the reasons why.

Before I get into what I want to talk about, specifically, I want to say yesterday – or today actually, was the end of the race: Cain's Quest. The longest snowmobile race in the world and it was put off by the people of Labrador West and the people of Labrador.

What we saw yesterday with Team 22, Team 00 and Team 88 crossing the finish line was the accumulation of so much hard work by the organizing committee to make this race possible and to attract international, national teams and people from around the province. Certainly, I want to specifically point out the participation of the teams from Labrador, especially the North Coast of Labrador, the Innu, the people from Southern Labrador that partook in this event. Mr. Chair, it's a sign that things – it's one of the good things that is happening in this province.

MR. BROWNE: It's growing.

MR. LETTO: And it's growing.

Mr. Chair, I want to talk about mining in Newfoundland and Labrador. When you talk about a bright spot in this province, Mr. Chair, you are part of that just as much as I am, and a lot of us in this province are, it's a bright spot. It's a great future in mining.

Myself and the minister just attended the PDAC Conference in Toronto where we had a booth there. At our booth, for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, were many prospectors showing off their finds. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, as a result of this conference this past week there are prospectors in this province who have auctioned off some very valuable projects that will develop into future mines.

I just want to point out, when you talk about mining, what we have to offer in this province. IOC is no doubt the largest mining company in the province, which is why Labrador West is the iron ore capital of the world, of Canada for sure. While we're going through a little bump in the road with IOC and its workers – and I'm confident the workforce and the company will reach an agreement in the next couple of weeks,

hopefully, that will see that operation continue the good work it's doing.

Wabush Mines; now when you talk about doom and gloom in this province, nobody took a hit in 2014 like the people did in Wabush. They took a serious, serious hit with the shutdown of Wabush Mines and the reduction in their pensions. They took a serious hit, Mr. Chair, but I tell you things are looking much brighter for Wabush Mines with the core resources on board. They're going through the process right now, their permitting is in place and they're raising capital on the market to be able to restart Wabush Mines and to put 250, 300 people back to work. So if that's not a bright spot, I don't know what is.

We have Alderon with the Kami Project, it's not a dead issue by any stretch of the imagination. We are looking to see that, hopefully, be rebooted in the very near future.

The minister today talked about Vale. Yes, there are concerns, no doubt about it, but we are confident and we are hopeful that Vale will find a way to be able to proceed with their underground development which will mean many, many jobs for the province, and of course will help in the Long Harbour situation as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Search Minerals, a company that very few people have heard about but in my friend, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, it's in her district. They are now going through an environmental assessment process for Search Minerals to develop rare earth, which is today in big demand because of the evolution of electric cars and all the other technology. It's a very valuable mineral that will be in demand, and we are confident that's going to go.

Now, Mr. Chair, as you know in your district, Anaconda, a very successful company that are looking to expand. Rambler Mines are very, very prosperous as well. They're seeing some good years in their production. You know how valuable gold is to the world.

There are many more prospects, by the way, in this province for gold. We met with some of them at PDAC. Marathon Gold has a very, very

good possibility of developing into a mine, which are showing great results in their exploratory work. When you look at that, there are all kinds of opportunities. Of course, I can't forget the Burin Peninsula and the reactivation of St. Lawrence and the fluorspar mine.

Mr. Chair, mining I tell you is a very, very important part of our future, not only for Newfoundland and Labrador, it's for Canada. That's why this past week our minister, the Minister of Natural Resources, was part of an agreement with the federal minister, Minister Carr, to proceed with a minerals and metals strategy and process that will see a program developed where we put in place guidelines to develop the mining industry right across this country because it's so an important part of our future.

Mr. Chair, when you look at things in this province, and we hear it from the other side over and over again that we're on the edge of the cliff; we're going to fall over. The sky is falling —

MR. BROWNE: Doom and gloom.

MR. LETTO: Doom and gloom, nothing is going right.

Mr. Chair, as long as we continue to say that, as long as people from Toronto or whatever get on television with their green glasses and their funny suits on and tell us how bad we are and how bad we're doing, as long as we allow people to do that, people will start believing it.

It's our prerogative and it's our duty in this House of Assembly, no matter what side of the House we're on, is to stop the rhetoric, is to be able to tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador there is a future, and I strongly believe there is. There are many more sectors besides mining that are very important for the future and very bright.

I'm talking about agriculture, aquaculture, innovation. Look at the awards that people are winning across this province, around this province at Memorial University and the Marine Institute for their development of innovation. We see innovation as a very important part of our future.

MR. BROWNE: Technology.

MR. LETTO: Technology; and we cannot forget the oil and gas sector. It's all a part of our future, but it's not something we can totally rely on, because there are other industries.

That's why we as a government are developing the technology industry, the agriculture industry, the aquaculture industry because we know we cannot put all our laurels, all our eggs in one basket as people have done in the past. We cannot go out and make all that money and spend, spend, spend, which was done in the last 12, 14 years, which has gotten us in the mess we're in today. We continue to say it because it's right.

We have turned a corner, Mr. Chair. It's time for us on both sides of the House to start believing that and to start telling the people in the province that we are behind them and we're here to support them. We're here to lead them in the development of important industries, no matter what they are, suppose they are mining, the oil and gas, innovation or whatever, agriculture, aquaculture, technology, forestry. We have so much potential, Mr. Chair. We have so much potential.

MR. BROWNE: And the fishery.

MR. LETTO: We cannot forget the fishery, of course. We cannot forget the fishery.

We have so much potential in this province to ensure our sustainability for the future; yet, we have people day after day trying to drag us down, trying to drag our people down, but it's time, Mr. Chair, that we stopped this and started talking about the future and be positive.

CHAIR: Order, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I look forward to having an opportunity to say a few words. The first thing I want to say is when I spoke to the last bill I talked about the fact that

the minister had promised me I would get some information from his department as it related to the inquiry and some questions I had. I said they never responded. They were a little bit too late, but I did get it. I do want to acknowledge that they actually did send the email and I did get the information. I thank the minister for that. I wish I had gotten it a little earlier so I would have had the information prior to speaking to the last bill, but I did get it. So I do acknowledge that.

Mr. Chair, I listened to the Member opposite there and what he had to say and I agree with him. There's a lot of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: We are very fortunate from a resource perspective. We are what I would say resource rich but, at this point in time, we're cash poor. That's really what it comes down to. There's absolutely no doubt that when you look at our potential for oil and gas and so on, there is tremendous opportunity in the future when it comes to our oil reserves. There is tremendous opportunity when we look at our natural gas reserves. I heard the Member talk about minerals, talk about mining and there's no doubt, the trough up in Labrador is rich with minerals.

I was told of at least four or five different mines that are there to be developed at some point in time. There is probably 10 times that, but for sure there are five or six of them, I think, whether it be iron ore, uranium or different things that are up there. We have gold mines here on the Island. We had the fluorspar mine. Nobody here, I don't think, is denying the fact that we have these resources, that we are blessed to have them.

We have a fishery that despite the challenges that we continue to do through, and we can talk about that and I could talk about the surf clam issue and other issues around adjacency and so on, but it's still a billion-dollar resource. I think it's over a billion dollars in terms of the fishery for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have tremendous potential when it comes to the tourism. I heard the Member for Bonavista

the other day talking about this district. There is no doubt, when you look at the Town of Bonavista, you look at Cape Bonavista, the Dungeon, the root cellars in Elliston, the fishermen's museum and so on, absolutely beautiful area and absolutely wonderful opportunities for tourism.

We have lots of opportunities on the Northern Peninsula, whether it be up in the Gros Morne area, in particular, comes to mind – lots of opportunities there. We have lots of opportunities on the West Coast. That's actually a real gem because we have opportunities not just in the summertime and in the fall, but the winter as well.

I don't think anybody here – I would hope not – would want to give the impression that we don't have anything going for us or that we're not going to turn the corner at some point in time. I really believe we are going to turn the corner at some point in time, and the sooner the better.

Anything this government can do to turn that corner, I'm with them 100 per cent. I'm sure every Member in the House of Assembly is with them 100 per cent if there are things that we can do to help turn the corner and to develop our industries, develop things like our IT sector, develop other industries, our aquaculture – a great opportunity for aquaculture.

I will say, though, in terms of the aquaculture, providing all of the environmental work is done and done properly and full processes, it's a wonderful – we've seen the Connaigre Peninsula, which has been revitalized because of aquaculture. We know there's going to be a tremendous opportunity on the Burin Peninsula with the Grieg project.

I really, sincerely hope that it can be done, it can be done properly and it can be done in an environmentally sustainable way. I don't have all the answers. I'm not an environmental scientist, I don't know, but it has to be done properly. We have to follow all the environmental procedures. If that's done and it can be done properly, I'm on board 100 per cent. It's going to bring a lot of jobs and that's a good thing.

When I hear this talk about preaching doom and gloom, I take a little bit of exception to it. It's not about preaching doom and gloom; we have a lot of positive things going for us, but it's also living in reality. It's one thing to say the glass is half empty versus half full, it's another thing to talk about looking at things through rose-coloured glasses as well or burying your head in the sand. I think we just have to be realistic about not just where we're going to go in the future, which is important, but where we are now.

I think we have to be cognizant of the everyday citizen. If you are somebody who is struggling to make ends meet, then the fact that we have a bunch of mines in Labrador that are going to be developed at some point in time, or at some point in time – if we discovered 10 new oil wells tomorrow, by the time that actually brings in oil and then we actually start getting royalties from it, that could be like 10 years out.

That's wonderful and it bodes well for our future, our children, our grandchildren, but the person who is trying to make ends meet today, that really is of little consequence to them. That's of little consequence to them about what oil is going to do or minerals are going to do 10 years from now; it means nothing to them.

So I think that there has to be a balance. There has to be a balance about planning for the future, being optimistic for our future but, at the same time, we have to be dealing with the here and the now and the people that are trying to live and survive in the province right now.

There's no doubt, I will say that the government talks about all the time we brought in this new enhanced seniors' supplement program and they get their money four times a year and that helps. It does help. I'm not denying it, but that's for the lowest of the low from an income point of view. That's fine for the person who's on the very, very lowest end of the scale. But what about the senior who is just getting their Canada Pension, their OAS and maybe they're getting a small work pension? Not somebody who's retiring on \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year but someone who maybe they're getting an extra \$10,000 a year and now they have a house they have to maintain. They have a small car or whatever they got. That senior supplement is not helping

them because they don't qualify for it. They don't qualify for that. They don't qualify for the drug cards. They don't qualify for any of the programs through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing on home repairs and stuff like that because they're just above that limit.

There are an awful lot of people that are in that boat, Mr. Chair, an awful lot of people. Those are the people who could least afford a lot of the measures that were taken in 2016 budget and so on and a lot that have been maintained since that time. I'm not going to rehash all that, that's not my intention and we have to look at it on a go-forward basis but I would just say to government we have to be cognizant – we cannot pretend that those things didn't happen. We can't pretend that it's not impacting people because it is. It is impacting people. It's impacting business.

If you go downtown, even people who are at the higher end – I say the higher end or the mid-scale salaries, who could suck it up, who could suck up the increases, so to speak. You go downtown on George Street or down to the bars and restaurants and places which are where people typically spend their – that's where the expendable income goes. Go to those places, talk to the restaurant owners and stuff like that, ask them how business has been. Business is down significantly because people don't have that additional revenue, they don't have that expendable income and it's impacting business and it's impacting the day-to-day lives of people.

So there are people who have been affected in different ways. I hope as time goes by and things improve we can look at, over time, trying to rein back some of those measures that were taken. I understand government, we're in a tough spot, I get that and I hope that as time goes on we can make the improvements we need to for the people of the province.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Chair, it's quite an honour to rise in the hon. House to represent the great District of Harbour Main. It's always an honour to rise in this hon. House and as far as me giving it to anyone, no, I'm just a nice person.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PARSLEY: I have reputation to uphold.

We're talking about the doom and gloom. I only can say good things in my district. From the District of Harbour Main good things are happening right through to Clarke's Beach, down to North River. Wherever I go, there are small businesses, there's always a hand there; but I have an important topic to talk about today and it's an honour, it's International Women's Day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PARSLEY: I just left, with my colleague for the great District of Harbour Grace, about an hour ago, an empowering event with about 180 women in a room, and I got to sit with a lady who celebrates her 100th birthday on Sunday, and I'm going to help her do that. But most important of all, we talked about changes. We talked about 100 years ago when women were not permitted to do the things they can do today.

When I looked in that room today and saw mayors, business people, young women, it was empowering because we all are strong. My colleagues here in the House on both sides, our Clerks, we're all mothers, have families and at the end of the day it's an important job here. You have to go home at night and you have the families, but I'm going to talk on another thing that's very dear to my heart today. Sometimes it covered under the rug but I can't cover anything under the rug.

I've been going through a great challenge in my life for the last three weeks. My 22-year old son had a severe accident and was on life support for nine days in a burn unit. But do you know what? My son is important. I sat by his bed, but the mental illness part – and I want everybody out there in any district of Newfoundland and Labrador to realize that mental illness don't just come to any family, it's in every family. If we

keep pushing it under the rug, there's not going to be anything done about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PARSLEY: It's like what's coming with the #MeToo movement. That's being exposed now and things are moving. They're talking about it.

Going back to mental illness, I'm hoping we're going to get the new Waterford because until the day I close my eyes, I will always have that worry where my son is going to be. It's every parent's worst nightmare when you get that call. It's a call no one wants to get.

I had to take that call on a Sunday afternoon to tell me my son was on fire in a field. That wasn't a great call. I sat by his bed day and night and I'm here at the House, too, to do a job for my constituents.

My fellow colleague spoke yesterday with a group in the House about a young lady who had lost her life. I don't want anyone else to lose their life. We want people to be able to come to talk to people and before this really happens. It's like mental health day, Let's Talk, if no one is talking, no one is listening. We need to put the supports in place. We need to be there because it's an illness today that's costing top dollars in the medical care system.

If my son maybe had been listened to, it wouldn't have cost \$5,000 today in an ICU to keep him alive, but he's alive now. When I walk out of that room and he says I love you, Mom, I know it's there. We all have to realize – I know we talk about our province, the shape it's in and everything else, but there are other things in our province, like I said, it's the mental health, it's our families.

We are strong women. If we weren't strong women today, we would not be able to do the jobs we do. We have to separate work sometimes from family, we have to come here. But I must admit, my colleagues in this House have been the best that anyone could ask for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PARSLEY: When I go to our party Whip every week and say: I have to be at the hospital to sit by his bed – go, no problem. Each and every one of you on the other side of the House takes time to ask and that's important.

Our Government House Leader: Don't worry, do what you have to do. Like I said, after attending that event today and seeing all those women from 17, 18, right up to 100, what does that tell you? That tells you that our province is doing something right also because events like these and people moving, people chatting is what causes these good things. We need good things in our province.

We need a new Waterford and I'm going to advocate for that. As long as I'm standing here, I will advocate. It's not only my son, it's someone else's daughter, it's someone else's father, it's aunts, uncles; no one escapes mental illness. That's what I want to talk about today. It's not under the rug anymore and we shouldn't push it there because it's a stigma.

When my husband was diagnosed with cancer, there was no stigma to that. He went in and had his chemo treatments and walked away with me, but when it comes to mental illness and you're seen going up those steps at the Waterford, it's a different ballgame.

I've been on all sides of the fence, but I'm also lucky enough to be standing here in the House of Assembly today with my great colleagues on both sides of the House to support – and that's what we're here for – one another. I know we throw things back and forth at each other, but at the end of the day, when our meetings are over, the House ends, we all go out there and we're civilized people again, which we should be.

Anyway, as far as my district, great things, like I said, are happening. I attended the mental health for the dip Sunday morning which raised a lot of money. It's great. It's great that things are happening. We're doing well in the district. We just had a new distillery open in Clarke's Beach. We're going to honour him soon in the House.

On a Sunday morning, 10 minutes from my house in Holyrood, when I can go out and buy vegetables off a local farmer and see the children probably 12, 13, 14 out selling the

vegetables, that's what you call agriculture. It's coming back and it's going to come back. I don't have to a supermarket, I can say: No, Sunday morning, we'll run out and get it fresh.

This is what our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador needs. We need more of this and it's coming. It just needs to take the time. We were in a bad position. We're coming out slowly but surely. At the end of the day, it's going to come and I'm hoping to be a part of it, like I just said.

I'm going to take my seat now and I'm not going to use my minutes, I have to be at the hospital shortly to see my son, but I thank each and every one of you. It was an honour, like I said. I wish every woman today in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador a happy International Women's Day because they deserve it, they work for it and there are better things to come here.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Reid): The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

AN HON. MEMBER: Follow that, b'y.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yeah, that is kind of a bit of a hard act to follow, but I'll do my best. The Member for Harbour Main, her district is a neighbour to mine. She serves a part of CBS as well, actually, Upper Gullies and Seal Cove portion of Conception Bay South, my hometown, the district I represent, obviously. So we attend a lot of events together and we've gotten to know each other fairly well over the last few years. It's been a pleasure to get to know her and I wish her all the best with her son. That's a serious incident and I do wish her all the best, and her son. I sincerely mean that.

Mr. Chair, as I said, representing Conception Bay South – I am the MHA. We call it CBS but it's neighbouring by Topsail - Paradise and Harbour Main districts, but my district takes up about 65 per cent, close to 70 per cent of all of CBS. Most residents in CBS refer to me as the

Member for Conception Bay South. I get calls from all over CBS.

With a town of 27,000 people, it can be daunting sometimes because you try to help everyone even if they're not in your district. Some people would rather deal with you or they just assume they come your way, especially a lot of seniors and whatnot. It has its moments, but it's a pleasure to be able to help them wherever you can and that they come to you for help.

About CBS, I guess we get up and speak – and I know my colleague always references about the beautiful, historic and everyone has beautiful, historic districts but CBS is quite a beautiful town. More about it; our population has increased by 30 per cent in the last 15 years and actually takes up a land mass of 62 square kilometres. In that space we have 27,000 residents.

One of the challenges in Conception Bay South, a lot of people with the population growth, the infrastructure is not caught up with the growth and the demands and the needs of the residents. For a long time with our geographic base, a 26 kilometre stretch runs right through it and my favourite topic of Route 60, a lot of water and sewer services are required, roadwork, networks and what have you. We've finally gotten to a point now with about 94 per cent service.

The town has been able to, in the last probably 10 years or more, start to address the infrastructure needs. It's something that has been a work in progress. The former administration started that process and it's a continuing process now in the town. With the growth and all these demands – and the town is still looking at other areas of improvement, but in the meantime you still have to have your basic infrastructure in place to meet with the growth.

In the last 10 years, I'd like to point out a few things because a lot of times it's referenced about a lot of expenditures and whether they are good or bad. I know I can speak for Conception Bay South and most residents can attest that a lot of the investments in some of the infrastructure has been great investments and they've been a great asset to a town.

When you're looking at, again, I'll say it's the second largest municipality in the province, those things are needed. Outside of the City of St. John's, you have the City of Mount Pearl. That's developed fairly well. In addition, CBS is no doubt the big growth area now, that and Paradise.

We have a new arena that's state of the art. It's a beautiful facility. It's one that most residents are proud of. It's a very well used and well received piece of infrastructure.

As well as the new town hall, we have the Manuels River Interpretation Centre, which I think most Members, or a lot of Members have had the opportunity to come out at one time or another to visit, I'm sure. If you haven't you should, because it is quite a beautiful facility and highlighting the geology of the Manuels River.

In addition, we have an artificial turf field at Topsail. We have a new town hall. We have all these investments but in that also, with all the growth requirements, we have schools. There are nine schools in Conception Bay South and seven of them are in my district.

The most recent one was – I had the pleasure, with the Minister of Education, to attend the grand opening there this past fall, which was a proud moment because it's a beautiful facility. Any time you can stand in front of a lot of happy children and parents, and attend the opening of something like that in your district, the school is absolutely beautiful. It was a very proud moment for me, and I thank the minister for giving me the opportunity to attend the opening with him.

Mr. Chair, also, I mentioned about a new fire hall. Sometimes we wait until the firemen's ball, at their night, that we'll pay credit to them. I've talked to many police officers in Conception Bay South and first responders, they tell me the Conception Bay South Fire Department is one of the fastest responding units they deal with in all of the Northeast Avalon. There's nothing but praise for them. They're very professional. They carry themselves – I mean they're proud. The way they carry themselves makes you feel proud to know they're representing Conception Bay South. They do a fantastic job.

They're averaging anywhere from 1,000 to 1,500 calls a year. So it's not just a call here and there. They are very busy, and a lot of serious calls too. A lot of big, high-profile issues that has come in the media, our CBS fire department were the first ones on the scene. They do a great job protecting our community and protecting the residents, and I want to thank them for that.

I want to speak on another couple of points. One in particular, in my district too, it's a growth area and we're struggling right now. Business growth is not where it needs to be. The tax base is low because of our lack of business which is causing struggles for the town, and I guess to get to the demands of the residents is a struggle. With our economy and where it is now, businesses are expanding but they're not really expanding at the pace they were.

So we're in a bit of a lull, but in that lull I encourage – every time I get an opportunity to speak and especially at times like this, I like to mention about some of the taxes. I don't hide behind the fact that I'm not a fan of taxes and I'll speak openly on that. I think most people in general aren't fans of taxes. As the saying goes, you don't tax yourself to prosperity. It does affect business growth. It's affecting my community and I'm sure it affects a lot of communities throughout the province.

A tax on insurance; I'd like to refer to this one because I think we got consumed, I guess, and rightfully so, with the levy. We talked about the levy. The public talked about the levy. You don't hear as much talk about the levy now until people go to do their taxes. It became the sounding board. It was the point. People now, it angers them when you mention the word "levy."

I said back then – and *Hansard* can show it – I always felt insurance tax was the hardest tax in comparison. If you had to pick one over the other, you would pick the insurance tax. I think that takes more money out of your pocket – I know it takes more out of my pocket – than the levy does. The levy became that punchline. People just jumped on the levy and it got a life of its own.

Every opportunity I like to remind people that tax is hurting a lot of people, a lot of working families. You have your middle-income people

that are struggling on a day-to-day basis. That extra 15 per cent is very hard on those people.

Mr. Chair, I have a couple of more minutes left. The hon. Member for Harbour Main talked about mental health. That's something that is near and dear to me. I did serve on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health. The recommendations, I try to follow it and keep abreast. I know a lot of them are being implemented.

As time goes on, I deal with constituents. I dealt with a constituent; it was a very personal issue with her. She was really struggling. It kind of caught my attention. As much as everything we do in mental health and addictions and the recommendations being implemented – and there are a lot of good things with access to services. There are a lot of good things happening and will happen.

What jumped out at me was we still have so much more to do. This one case – as time goes on I'd like to talk about it further and another time when I get up. But just to start the conversation, this person – everything was lined up. The system still needs a lot of work because there were a lot of roadblocks for her. They didn't know where to go.

I said I'll call it the roadmap to getting better. Everything was lined up for this person through the department and through my contacts trying to help her; the family was in desperate need. They still spent 22 hours in emergency before she could get in and get her bed that was already waiting for her before she went to emergency.

It's not like a broken foot. If I broke my foot today someone here, hopefully at least – I hope someone would get me to the hospital to get me an X-ray and get me a cast.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: There you go.

But mental health, unfortunately, Mr. Chair, is not like that. No one knows what to do. That's the question I ask people: What do you do?

Everyone knows how to deal with a first aid issue, a broken bone or some other ailment, but

if you're dealing with a mental health issue, my guess is the vast majority of the population, and not only this House, do not know what to do.

I'm going to carry on and talk about that further my next time up, Mr. Chair.

I thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible) to get up and speak in Interim Supply, not as a minister, there are lots of wonderful things I can talk about that's happening in my Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, but I'll save that for another day because I don't often get the opportunity anymore to stand up and talk about some of the wonderful things that are happening in my district.

Everybody today, I think, has been trying to send a positive message that it's not all doom and gloom, good things are happening. There are certainly lots of good things happening in my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: Before I do that, Mr. Chair, I would be remiss if I too didn't mention, we're all wearing purple today in celebration of International Women's Day. I also am an individual who has been extremely blessed to come from generations of very strong women, women who have shaped my life and that I owe so much to for who I am today. My mom, at five foot and 99 pounds, is one of the feistiest people that I know. My grandmother, lots of strong women, business women in my family, but I want to single out an individual today, Mary Ann Snow.

She is a young lady from my district and she was the first female in Newfoundland and Labrador to become a journeyperson electrician. That was in 1986 and I will tell you, Mr. Chair, she's seen a lot of changes over the last 30-plus

year. She went in this very male-dominated field. She's done extremely well.

Today, she resides in the Harbour Grace area; they recently moved from home. She's actually a certified planner with Nalcor working out in Soldiers Pond. I think she deserves to be recognized as the first person in our province in the male-nominated area, first female to become a certified electrician. We're all quire proud of Mary Ann and I certainly know that her family is.

It's amazing, Mr. Chair, I can spend the afternoon talking about strong women in my district, in the province, across Canada and beyond. It's amazing when you think about, this year made the 100th anniversary in the UK of women's right to vote. When you think about the fact that – I don't have the numbers in front of me – 100 years ago women were not even considered persons under the law to have the right to vote and they've gone on to do so many, many wonderful things.

Mr. Chair, in my district since we formed government, we've seen tremendous progress in our roadwork. I think it's \$145 million total that have been announced; significant commitment in what is a difficult fiscal climate that we still operate in as a province and as a government here. I'm talking about an area from the main trunk that runs through Labrador, the road that's been built, much of it have been widened and upgraded and now we're working on the pavement, Mr. Chair.

Last year, we saw pavement start in Red Bay and go north to Mary's Harbour, which was around 80 kilometres of pavement. We're going to see that continue this year, Mr. Chair, from Mary's Harbour on down to Charlottetown branch. So it's wonderful for me every weekend when I'm driving after four years of driving on the gravel road, now I'm certainly appreciating the new pavement. From Charlottetown branch to Cartwright branch, we have seen the widening and upgrading and we're going to see a tender going out soon for pavement.

Mr. Chair, in the Labrador Straits, which has been in the media a lot because the pavement on Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay is almost 40 year old pavement, in a very

dilapidated condition. It was risk to the travelling public. Our Premier came in and the Minister of Transportation and Works, in October, and we made the announcement, and a tender will be going out very soon, to start new pavement in that area.

This year from the Quebec border going north 22 kilometres, we're going to see new pavement and the people in the area are certainly pleased to see this progress happening after a long, long time of waiting. The road has been absolutely desperate, Mr. Chair. The Minister for Labrador Affairs, our Premier, holds the portfolio and he's certainly shown with the announcements that we have had since we formed government that his commitment is there to Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and to the other areas in Labrador.

Municipal capital works projects, Mr. Chair, we have done extremely well with things like water and sewer projects; probably at least 10 projects in my district and we have some more applications in and more good news coming.

Tourism, the numbers at Red Bay this year, World Heritage UNESCO site, were up more than 40 per cent. I do have some beautiful areas that I love to talk about in my district. Our Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation continues to support places like Battle Harbour, Mr. Chair. You can fly in to Blanc Sablon or take the ferry. You drive north as far as Mary's Harbour and you get a boat to Battle Harbour. You're on an island in the middle of the ocean with all the best amenities that you will find anywhere, but you are taking a step back in time living like they might have lived in the 1800s to a time when cod was king and the capital of that region; a tremendous history, an absolute beautiful place.

Mr. Chair, as we continue to complete the infrastructure like getting the roads paved, we're only going to see those numbers continue to grow in that area. We've got Point Amour – so many places I could mention. We've got Cartwright which is the gateway to the Mealy Mountains Park there on the north, so lots of wonderful things.

One of the things that there's a focus right now on is improving the accommodations in the area. We have some great accommodations. As more

and more people come, as we get opened up to the outside world, we want to make sure that the experience for the visitor, not just in what they're seeing as they're moving about, but when they go to that hotel room to stay and things like that, that it is as comfortable as they would see anywhere, Mr. Chair.

Given what we had to work with when we formed government and thought we were facing a \$1.1 billion deficit and it turned out to be \$2.7 billion, we had a rough year, Mr. Chair. The Opposition gets up a lot and talks about the 300 taxes and fees. The truth of it is, Mr. Chair, 240 of them already existed when we formed government. We did not form government and all of a sudden there were 300 taxes and fees. All of us on this side of the House ran for our various districts. We wanted to do positive things in our district.

We had a very difficult first year. When you form government, you're teetering on bankruptcy and you're potentially facing to have the Government of Canada or another province take over your affairs, that is not a good place to be, Mr. Chair. The Member for Windsor Lake spoke very eloquently earlier this week on the tough choices that had to be made around the budget.

Mr. Chair, the reason we had to make tough choices on the budget was because of one elephant that's in every room. Every room that we go to the elephant in the room is Muskrat Falls. Five hundred and twenty-six thousand people in this province, rapidly aging demographics and many people on a fixed income are seniors. We have this project that was sold to the province, a bill of goods for just over \$5 billion. Now we're two years behind and it's \$12.7 billion.

Mr. Chair, sometimes they get up and talk about affordable housing and things like that. If they want to talk about affordable housing their legacy around affordable housing: Muskrat Falls, the doubling of electricity rates – and I only have a minute left, but I have to mention it because day after day after day we sit in this House and we get asked why did you do this; why did you do that.

Well, Mr. Chair, it's the position that we found ourselves in because this monstrosity of a project happened that never should have happened. The decisions were not informed decisions that we made. The joint review panel, the PUB that was put in place to determine if this would be the least-cost option for the province, they did not even to get to finish their work, and it is very unfortunate.

Still, for me, when I move around the province, and I'm pretty well travelled and well connected, the number one worry that people have now is how are we going to pay for that; how are we ever going to get out of debt. My children, my grandchildren are going to be paying for this project.

Mr. Chair, we've been talking about the inquiry that's about to happen and sometimes people will – I've heard on VOXM recently: Why are we doing an inquiry and spending more money? One of the things, the paramount reason why we need to do an inquiry is to find out what decisions was that made on, what information did they have, and to ensure that something like that never happens again – never happens again – so that people's children and grandchildren are paying for this project that we really couldn't afford, when I believe in my heart of hearts there was better way.

I thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to another one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased today to rise and take a minute to speak to Interim Supply. It basically deals with the procedural issue in regard to the financing of the province until we get to the actual bringing down of the budget and setting of the Estimates for the next fiscal year. This process takes place every year to get us through the interim periods to when the next fiscal budget is approved for operations of the province, all the operations and all the costs that are incurred by the province.

Where it's a money bill, it's a discussion that we can have on any topic by any Members of the

House, and that's what we've heard this afternoon and yesterday. I do want to mention my colleague for Harbour Main and recognizing her contribution in regard to sharing some of her experiences with mental illness, first-hand experience in dealing with a loved one and the challenges with that. I certainly thank her for sharing that with us.

For all of us here in the Chamber none of us, I don't think, are remiss from having that experience, dealing with a loved one, friends, family, or people we know, and the challenges with that. A lot of the initiatives we've seen over the past number of years in the public domain, in legislatures like this, and as well for the private sector we see companies get involved, non-profit groups, in regard to really looking at the word we use, is stigma, with mental illness and how we pull that veil back and have an open and free discussion, which is the first step. I think that's started to take place, continues to happen, and it's good it is continuing to happen. I certainly appreciate the comments, as I said earlier, from the Member for Harbour Main and sharing her experiences. I certainly congratulate her for that.

Over the last day, we've heard a lot of discussion on various aspects of the province and where we're too; discussions on finances and where we've gone over the past two years, where we're looking at going in the future. Certainly my colleague before me talked about decisions and choices that are made, but that's what it's about. Economic direction, budgets, forecasts, four-year mandates, it's all about making choices.

Those choices represents any government in the direction of where they want to take the province, where they find it at the time they get elected, whether they're re-elected or whether they're a new government coming in. It's about making choices and trying to drive that agenda, generate revenues for the province and ultimately, at the end of the day, the government's role is to provide those public services that are needed by the residents of the province to make sure it's a place that people want to move, people want to live, people want to raise their family, which is all tied to economic growth in a region.

Certainly from my perspective in my District of Ferryland –

(Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I thought my speech was riveting, but I didn't think it was going to get that kind of response. So we'll carry on.

Mr. Chair, I was referencing my District of Ferryland which is geographically a pretty large area taking in from the Ruby Line, the outskirts of the Goulds south to St. Shott's, taking in the northern end of Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove as well and a broad collection of the City of St. John's, as well as a number of other rural communities.

As well, from an economic point of view, it has certainly a lot of activity that supports employment and other activities in the urban centre but also a lot of industry, fabrication, fishery, tourism is a huge part of the area and many other small companies and small businesses that support the economy.

Many parts of that have continued to grow and have continued to move forward over the past number of years while the latter end of the southern Avalon, dating back to the cod moratorium and some of the challenges with that, have seen a significant reduction. Yet, I certainly look at some of the activities that have gone over the past number of years in terms of some of the entrepreneurs, community leaders, non-profit groups and a lot of the work they're doing to maximize the benefits that they have there. Whether it's small business supporting the local economy or whether it's things like tourism that we're seeing, especially we always talk about the amount of people that pour into a place like Ferryland. Anywhere in a particular season, it could be up to almost 20,000 visitors to the Colony. That's dispersed out through the region. The key to that is to bring people in, get them to stay for an extended period of time and certainly see the benefit of that.

When we look at that and you look at two years, we were lucky enough to get the World Heritage site UNESCO designation for Mistaken Point for the 560-million year old fossils in recognition of that on an international stage. We've seen the benefit of that last year and year before in regard to the amount of visitation and the activity we've seen for that. What we continue and need to see is support from government in regard to the administration of volunteer group. They are the administrators of Portugal Cove South, Cape Race Heritage. They are volunteers that manage the particular interpretation site there in Portugal Cove South. To date, we haven't seen any new money invested for administration from this administration, but it's something we're looking for in this particular budget to allow that entity to continue to expand, to continue to grow and continue to meet the needs of all those coming into the region.

Now, recently, we've just seen some entrepreneurs, some business investments in Portugal Cove South to provide those types of services to the area, which you want to see. In Trepassey, as well, we've seen some great investment in the inn in Trepassey. Done some tremendous work, Carol Ann and John Devereaux, with the activities they've carried out in Trepassey in regard to reinvestment in the inn there.

The amount of visitors that are going through has done great success in promoting the area, as other business owners have, and we're starting to see the returns on that. That's positive for the Southern Avalon. It's a real jewel that we have there that we need to continue to polish and make sure we can get the greatest return from it. We'll certainly continue to see that.

Then we talk about sustainability and community spirit. I was in St. Shott's just a few weeks ago. It's probably a community of 60 or 70 people. They have a community get together every year and a community dinner just to celebrate their communities, to celebrate and say thank you to the volunteers they have there.

It's a very small community but a sense of community, a sense of sustainability and a sense of contribution. They have a municipal council. They provide services in their community. It's a

very small community but run very well, very committed and has that, what you'd call Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the will to survive. I certainly congratulate them, the volunteers and all they do. It's really indicative of small areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, continue to want to survive and make a difference. It's a pleasure to represent all of the area and the drive they have.

I look at as I go through in this debate getting up again talking about other issues, in a general sense, related to the upcoming budget and what we may see or what we may need to see, some of the things that we talked about over the past couple of years in regard to reaching out to the federal government to provide the various programs and services and that they do their job in regard to providing those services. We have to work collectively with the federal government as an equal partner in the Federation and continue to receive our fair share.

At times, we need to often be aggressive on issues that come up. Just recently today in Question Period, we talked about the surf clam issue and what devastation that could have for Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to continue to work hard and hold the federal government accountable to make sure they deliver on what they need to.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to get up and participate in this debate today. As other Members have said, this is a little bit of an unusual debate here in the House. It's a debate on what we call the Interim Supply debate. Basically, that means that while we're waiting for the budget to be approved, we approve a certain amount of money to allow for the continuation and the operations of government for the period while we're approving the budget.

It means we have more time to look at the budget and to give it a good examination in Committee and in the Estimate Committees before we actually approve it. So that's the purpose of this debate here is to provide the money to allow the operations of government to continue. To my understanding, there's sort of a timeline in which we have to approve these funds.

As other speakers have mentioned as well in this debate, in the US they've had several situations where a similar sort of piece of legislation has been held up and the operations of government have been ground to a halt.

It has to be done before the end of the fiscal year, the end of March. It certainly has to be done a certain period before the end of the month to allow for cheques to be mailed out and things like that. So it's sort of a time sensitive debate that we're having here. It has to conclude before the end of March, before that period, and also allowing for that period for things to happen.

This debate as well, because it's a finance bill, it's usually an opportunity for Members to talk on any issue which they want. Some Members, as we've seen here today, have chosen to talk about issues and items in their district. I was very interested to listen to the Member for Lab West. He said it's important to talk about some of the good things that are happening. That sort of got me thinking about some of the good things that are happening in my own district. I want to continue on in that theme and talk about tourism primarily, the good things that are happening and the potential that exists there in the District of St. George's - Humber.

The area that I think has a lot of unrealized potential, and some of it is being realized through the hard work of people in the area, is the Codroy Valley. I think hiking has huge potential in that area. There's the Starlight Trail that's already in place. The area development association is working with the department to put in place the coastal trail that runs between St. Andrew's and Searston along the coast. Wonderful views there.

As well, there's another coastal trail that runs from the harbour in Codroy up along to the

lighthouse in Cape Anguille. Some of the best scenery you'll see anywhere in the world. I think that's something we have to look at developing. That's a potential that's there, and I'm pleased to see people within the department, the minister, are looking at that potential. The minister was out to the area this summer and had an opportunity to witness some of the beauty of the area firsthand.

Also, another thing he did while he was in the area was he visited the Codroy Valley Folk Festival, which is a very interesting festival. Anyone who hasn't been there, I would encourage you to look it up and attend.

The Codroy Valley is one of the few areas in the province where we have a Scottish population, where we have a Scottish culture. You'll hear fiddling, Scottish fiddling, you'll hear bagpipes that maybe you don't hear so often in other parts of the province. So that's an interesting aspect of the valley I think that has potential for further development for tourism. I think there are other things in the valley, but those are a few of the highlights.

If you travel east in the district, northeast, the next place you'll come to in my district is Bay St. George South. That's an area that is also steeped in history and heritage. If you look at it's a farming area, primarily, farming logging and that sort of area.

One of the assets in the area that the heritage group is looking at is developing the Legge farmhouse in Cartyville. That's a very interesting property there. I think it has a lot of potential. The group is raising funds, doing some renovations there and up-keeping the property and making it easier to access through the roads. That facility has a lot of potential, in terms of things that can happen there and the potential to attract visitors to the area.

Another thing I mentioned in a Member's statement earlier this week was the *Arran* stowaways and the story of the young boys, really, who stowed away aboard a ship leaving Scotland. They were set aside on the ice flows in Bay St. George and were rescued by some of the fishermen in the area and brought ashore. Two of them died and four were rescued. That's something part of the heritage of the area that

people are looking at commemorating this summer as well. I think that's a part of the heritage of the area.

Another story that's maybe little known outside of the area is the story of the Hulan family and the lady who was probably one of the first women entrepreneurs in Newfoundland and Labrador. She built up quite an empire there in the McKay's and Robinsons area. The story is a very interesting story and it's something that I think can be further developed as well.

Hiking in that area has a lot of possibilities, but the T'Railway is an important tourism asset in that area as well. One of the other areas that myself and the minister visited this summer was the Pirate's Haven in Robinsons. They're right on the Robinsons River; you can look down on beautiful views there. Also, they offer some biking trails along the T'Railways and other areas in Bay St. George. They're very interesting trails.

As you continue to travel east, you'll come to Flat Bay, St. Teresa, that area. Of course, the Powwow, which has become famous around the province for celebrating Aboriginal Mi'kmaq culture, happens in that area every summer. About 10,000 people attend the event on the field. I think there's a lot of potential there to sort of continue that type of cultural tourism and to expand on providing services to people who visit the area for that event and other events throughout the year.

As you go further east, you come to St. George's. In St. George's, one of the tourism assets of the whole area is the museum there. It tells the story of the area. It tells the story of Mi'kmaq culture in the area. It tells the story of Sandy Point, Mr. Chair, which is another part of our history that is not celebrated enough. Sandy Point was a thriving community in 1700s and 1800s and people from all over the world came to Sandy Point to trade. You would hear many different languages spoken in Sandy Point, a very international community at that time. It's a part of our history that we don't celebrate enough and I think has potential.

As well, if you look at Steady Brook, it's a community that is a multi-season community

that has tremendous potential for tourism year-round.

Those are a few things and maybe, later in debate, I'll have an opportunity to talk about some other good things that are happening in the District of St. George's - Humber.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand once again to speak in Interim Supply. I am actually talking about something that involved money, and it's child care. I raised the area of child care in Question Period today and the minister responsible for Education and Early Childhood Development said that they had done a lot, but the reality is that the majority of working families cannot access affordable child care in Newfoundland and Labrador. They simply cannot.

We have the average of people spending, sometimes, certainly more than 25 per cent of their income on child care. In countries like Sweden, the average amount that families pay for, for instance, their first child in child care is 3 per cent of their wage. For the second child, it's 2 per cent of their wage and for the third child, they pay nothing. So that's an incredible difference.

I'm sure that most of us here in the House have young working moms in their districts who have said they simply cannot afford to go back to work because they can't afford the high cost of child care. I think the average cost in Newfoundland and Labrador for child care for an infant is over \$1,200. The average cost for a toddler in child care is a little bit over \$1,000.

Now, when you look at that the majority of minimum wage earners in our province are women, it's not possible. They cannot afford that much on child care, particularly, if you think of rent, which is at least \$800 a month – at least – for a very basic one, possibly, in some

places, two-bedroom apartment; maybe a basement apartment. The cost of heat has gone up. The cost of food has gone up. Or if you own a home, the cost of a mortgage and household insurance.

What we have, Mr. Chair, is a lot of women who want to be, need to be in the paid workforce having to remove themselves from the paid workforce because of the cost of child care. I'm sure there are a number of us here who have children ourselves, who have had children and know how difficult it is for them to access child care. We have grandparents taking on child care. We have children in child care situations that are not highly regulated enough. It's a juggling game. It's constantly a juggling game for many families trying to afford child care.

When women have to exit the paid workforce because they can't afford child care, the financial repercussions on them start to have a domino effect. Because not only are they not earning for those years that they have to remove themselves from the paid workforce because of child care, the other thing that happens is it affects their pensions, it affects their seniority, it affects their ability to apply for other jobs within wherever they were working. It has that whole domino effect.

Now, the domino effect as well is not only in terms of individual working families and the economies within individual working families, it also affects the economy of the province because that is those fewer people in the workforce generating money to spend in our economy and also generating taxable income. So it has a domino effect again on individual families and also on the economy of the province.

Fifty years ago, the Pearson government established the Royal Commission on the Status of Women – 50 years ago – and after they did their inquiry, after they did their commission, their report came out in 1970. It said that women in Canada will only truly be equal if we have a universal, acceptable, affordable, accessible, public child care system. Here we are, 50 years later, and we still don't have that

Again, that Royal Commission said that this is one of the foundations for women to achieve true economic equality in our society.

What has happened is that government has left the issue of child care to the private market. We don't leave kindergarten or primary school or secondary school to the private market. We don't leave our post-secondary education to the private market, although there are parts of it in private colleges. That's another issue that we could talk about another day, Mr. Chair.

We don't leave our hospitals to the private market. We don't leave our schools to the private market. We don't leave roads to the private market. So when research has shown that quality early childhood education gives a heads-up, gives a leg-up to our children, why would we leave that to the private marketplace? That's exactly what government has done.

Government is giving a little bit more subsidy to early childhood care workers, to those who work in child care centres. Government is giving them a little bit of subsidy for their salary.

Government is giving a little bit of subsidy to the child care centres. Government is giving a little bit of subsidy to families who are under a certain limit to help them pay for this very high-cost child care.

Basically, what has happened is that we see 160 recommendations from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The only one where really nothing has been done in terms of an affordable, accessible, public, universal, public child care system – that's the only recommendation where government has totally failed in that recommendation.

Again, we see that government doesn't rely on the private market for a number of very important social programs. Child care is a social program. It's not a privilege. It's not a frill. It's good for our children, it's good for women and it's good for our economy. It's good for family economy and it's good for the overall economy of the province. There's lots of research out there to say that.

The minister responsible for Education and Early Childhood Development knows that as well. He has stood up in this House, whether he was on this side of the House or whether he was on that side of the House, stating the information. Emphatically stating the research that has been done to show that this is good for

our children, this is good for our economy. I understand he's in a position right now and he's not as emphatically saying that right now but he is saying some of the sort of tweaking that governments have done.

Government's counterpart in Ottawa promised this and they haven't done it. What they're doing is they're putting a little bit of money here, a little bit of money there, a little bit of money there, but leaving it to the private market. We know that doesn't work.

We're not leaving our health care to the private market. We're not leaving our educational system to the private market. We're not leaving our hospitals or roads to the private market, nor should we leave one of the most foundational pieces in a stable economy – child care – to the private market. It's not working. We all know that.

When we look at what happens in other jurisdictions, for instance, Quebec. Quebec was going through a very difficult time, economically, in the '70s. They had a decline in population. They established the first publicly administered, publicly supervised, publicly delivered child care system in the country. It was \$5 a day for families. Their economy grew from this. They had more people in the workforce, predominately more women who re-entered the workforce after having a child; therefore, boosting the whole economy. Their children were doing better, and also their population numbers grew.

Now, we know one of our greatest challenges is declining population. Many of us have had, within even our own families, but certainly in our districts, where young working families say: We can't afford to have another child – and we are desperate for an increase in our population.

Mr. Chair, this only makes sense on so many levels and we can do it. It does take an injection of funds, but we can do it. I know this government can work with the federal government to insist on behalf of the working families of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise today to represent the people of the beautiful District of Exploits, one of 40 beautiful districts to be found in our province.

Interim Supply enables government to – without disruption – continue to bring forward the many vital services needed by the people of our province.

Now just to step back, before I get into some of the more positive aspects of what I have to say, I'd like to go back for a moment to the early days of our government's mandate and the \$2.7 billion deficit left in the wake of the previous government's departure. At the time, we found ourselves left with a sinking ship peppered with a multitude of leaks. Undoubtedly, without some kind of a response, we surely were headed the way of the Greeks and their financial woes of several years ago.

AN HON. MEMBER: We wouldn't want to go the way of the Greeks.

MR. DEAN: No, you wouldn't. Good people.

We responded, not in the way we wanted to, but in the way we had to; all the while being criticized by the very ones who brought this calamity to our doorsteps and the whole while, right up until today, not offering up any alternative proposals to bring us back from the brink.

Since being elected as MHA for Exploits, there have been a number of exciting things that have happened in the district. The following is just a listing of some but not all, and I hope to acknowledge some more in the upcoming days.

In February of 2016 we had an announcement of funding for community-based organizations. The announcement included a number of upgrades to my district including a \$4,500 upgrade to the stadium in Bishop's Falls and \$2,000 for the Peterview Recreation Board.

In September of 2017 the Premier and various ministers visited Botwood. We had a \$38.8 million investment of municipal infrastructure across the province that was announced from the Town of Botwood. For my district, this meant major infrastructure upgrades for the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, for the Town of Botwood, major waterline repair for Phillips Head and major road upgrades throughout the Town of Bishop's Falls. These funding initiatives were important in ensuring our communities remain safe and sustainable for years to come.

November 2017 was also an exciting time for my district with two major funding announcements which would go to the citizens in the District of Exploits. These announcements included \$120,000 to enhance and expand the arts and heritage interpretation programs and overall experience at the Fox Moth Museum and Heritage Centre. This funding was used to increase access to museum collections and heritage displays at the museum which will enhance overall visitor experience.

The Norris Arm Heritage Society has been celebrating and preserving this region's rich cultural history for many years. It's great to see how our government helps to continue their efforts. That same month, we also saw the announcement of improvements to the long-term care home in Central Newfoundland. The protective care unit in Botwood received a 20-bed expansion as a result of these improvements. This protective care unit has seen an increase in Alzheimer's and dementia patients in recent years, and seeing an expansion in their capacity will allow the centre to care for more individuals in the coming years.

I'd like to say something about that issue. Going back several years ago, under my signature when I was mayor, and the experts of the day – these long-term care investments are long overdue and they were needed 20 years ago. Again, under my signature at the time there was a merry-go-round of Health Ministers in the previous government going through the revolving doors; but, each time one went, we'd follow up with the same letter on our concern about expansion to the Twomey centre, long-term care needs, and the dementia and Alzheimer's concerns not just throughout the province but throughout the country.

So it's nothing new. My point being is that at the time the government was flush with cash and some of the right decisions weren't made. I'm not saying a lot of the investments – I've heard it from the other side and they have made some good investments, but they missed the boat. The health care of the people of the province and everyone on the other side and this side agrees that it's the most important thing for us to bring forward for our people.

I'm proud to say that this government, even through trying fiscal times, in my opinion, that's just another indicator of more wise spending on the part of the government of the day.

More recently we've seen a new addition of our Five-Year Provincial Roads Plan. This addition includes a number of upgrades to the highway system in Exploits, including coming upgrades to three of the major routes throughout the district: the Botwood Highway, Route 350; the Fortune Harbour Road, Route 352; as well as the Bay d'Espoir Highway, Route 360.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: Tell us about the Sir Robert Bond Bridge.

MR. DEAN: Yes, and the Sir Robert Bond Bridge. There are quite a few things, as I alluded to earlier, that I'm going to bring up as we move forward in the coming days.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. DEAN: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. DEAN: Yeah, that's right.

The other thing I would like to say to everybody here in the Chamber is over the last year and a half, I'd like to acknowledge the efforts on the part of the Premier and numerous ministers in visiting the district. I know that pretty well each and every minister were told by people from as far north as Leading Tickles and Fortune Harbour, right back going down south, right out to Norris Arm and Grand Falls-Windsor, that it was unheard of.

I know that the presence and the time taken by the Premier and the ministers to come to our district, again, unheard of before; that's what they all told me and the Premier and ministers. It was much appreciated by the people in the district, as well as myself.

That's pretty well it. I still have a couple minutes left. I would like to, as some people have earlier, acknowledge today as International Women's Day to my women colleagues here in the House of Assembly, our staff here and around the province.

MS. P. PARSONS: The Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

MR. DEAN: Oh, yes – all women throughout our province. Last but not least, my wife, my daughters and my mom. Mom is currently a patient at the Hugh Twomey centre. She has Alzheimer's. Betty alluded to mental illness and stuff earlier. Anyway, it's just good to know that my mom and other people's moms and wives are in good hands in whatever facility they find themselves in in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: I want Mom to know that I certainly do love her. She's not well. I know I'm not the only ship afloat on the ocean and each and every one of us here go through these trials and tribulations.

With that being said, kudos to all the women in our lives. It's like the old saying goes: The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. That's certainly a tribute to moms and women everywhere.

Thanks for your time, Mr. Chair, and fellow colleagues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Good afternoon, Members and hon. House.

I would also like to reiterate my wishing of respect for International Women's Day in this

House and beyond. Not only today, but I think we need to concentrate on giving women more respect throughout the whole entire year.

This past fall, I had the opportunity of walking the full District of Mount Pearl North. It spans the largest city and the second largest city. My district takes in both Mount Pearl and St. John's. We've got residents who have lived there for 70 years, 50 years, 30 years, 10 years and brand new residents. We're just about to the end of our development potential and then we'll have to start re-developing.

Mount Pearl itself started off as a cabin country and you'd hardly think that today by looking at the variety of styles of homes but, in certain areas, you can still pick out the original houses that were built there. A lot of them arrived, I guess, in the early 1900s when they wanted to get out of town and set up in Mount Pearl.

It's a very supportive community. I grew up in Mount Pearl and went to school in Mount Pearl. Maybe I'm being a little bit biased, but I've never seen community spirit like I've seen in Mount Pearl.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. LESTER: The Frosty Festival, which myself and the Member alongside had just participated in – I can remember the first Frosty Festival; I was in grade three at the time. Then when I graduated high school, my high school was out in the woods, and now it's surrounded by houses. I went knocking on those very doors and they're all empty nesters. The houses have been there for 30 years and their children have moved away or moved to other communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's interesting to meet a lot of my friends' parents, and walk the streets where I, as a child, used to have boil ups and chase rabbits. It's a big difference for sure.

One thing I did hear over and over again, and not trying to take the light off anybody on a fixed income because there are serious issues with people on fixed incomes, but there's a segment in the middle of fixed incomes that is really, really affected by the issues in our economy. They've kind of been ignored from time immemorial, and that's the young families who are working for private business. That

spans right across our whole province and that's somewhere I think we need to put more emphasis on. We need to keep that generation here in our province.

Like the other Member said there from the NDP, child care is a big thing. Without child care, you can't go to work. Without work, you can't afford to have children. So that's something that we really need to work on, providing affordable child care, access to child care, giving those families who are working for private business the help that they need so that they can stay here, live here, raise families here, retire here and contribute to our economy.

Along with those middle families, the ones in the middle section, I met some of the oldest residents of Mount Pearl. I actually met one resident of Mount Pearl, he had lived there, moved out when he was 19, built his house with his own hand tools and now he's almost 100. He's fortunate enough; he has seven kids and every one of the kids still live in Mount Pearl. Of course, now they have grandchildren as well. He's actually a great, great-grandfather. That's absolutely amazing that he's been able to keep his family there in Mount Pearl. Hopefully, all of us will be able to have the same fortune.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Mr. Thistle.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Thistle. No, it was not actually Mr. Thistle. Actually, I had the opportunity – Mr. Thistle built the first school in Mount Pearl. For his 92nd birthday I had the privilege to take him on a sleigh ride on my farm. He was amazed at the size of my horses. He said his horse was a lot smaller when he drove that in Mount Pearl.

Along with the residential section of Mount Pearl we have a big booming industrial park, known as Donovans Industrial Park, and that has done well over the years. Largely, as of recent, it has picked up a lot of oil business. There are several large supply areas and pipe yards. That's still a big contributor to the economy of Mount Pearl and, of course, the surrounding areas providing employment and it will provide employment in the foreseeable future.

I think all of us in this House recognize that we need to change the perception of people in the

province and really point out, no matter what corner or what part of the province you live in, there's opportunity everywhere and it's there for us as a people to seize it. Sometimes it just takes someone to point it out or to give a little bit of support and we'll see us rebound into a viable economy powerhouse, pardon the pun, in this region and in North America.

Something that's been close to my heart, I guess my whole life, is the agriculture industry. The potential for agriculture has always been here, and the demand for agriculture products will always be here as long as there are people here.

We need to produce our own food. I guess in the food delivery system, we're the last place in North America to actually get food. That puts us in a very precarious situation, that if there's any sort of a supply glitch along the whole North American continent we'll be the last ones to get fed and maybe we'll be the ones with the empty shelves. That's something we need to work on, not only the development of the agriculture industry. We need to encourage people to grow more food at home, which is something that is growing.

We have the Little Green Thumbs project which is province wide. That's sponsored by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture and that teaches kids how to grow food. That's an important step. When I take kids out on our farm for tours, I'm so surprised on how much farming techniques they can actually talk to me about. This is part of the curriculum advancement and the Little Green Thumbs program.

Ten years ago, we had kids come to our farm and they'd pull a carrot out of the ground that would be covered in dirt and their parents would say to them: We're going to bring that home and eat it. The kid would say: I'm not eating that that came out of the ground. Well, I don't hear those kinds of comments anymore. Kids are excited about pulling a carrot out of the ground. Sometimes they're covered in mud and you might even see a scattered worm. Usually it's the parents who get a little bit more squeamish than the kids. That's a good sign.

We can learn a lot from watching our kids. I think that's the stage when everybody learns,

when you're a child. Sometimes as adults we're a little bit less receptive to learning. If you watch kids long enough you'll realize, as an adult, there are still tons of things to learn that we can use to make all our lives better and more beneficial.

As far as encouraging young people to get involved in agriculture as a career, a lot of people don't consider agriculture as a career because you think you have to be a farmer. Now while I'd recommend that employment, there are other opportunities for people to get involved in the agriculture industry, whether it be in the processing sector, the inspection sector, which is through the federal and provincial governments. That's also very important.

Another thing our climate particularly provides opportunity with is research. Nowhere else, I don't think, in North America do we see the effects of climate change happening as much as we do here in Newfoundland. We're out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and the great changes that are happening. Great, not by being of merit, but massive changes that are happening to our climate are definitely evident with sea ice conditions, water conditions, the changing of fishery stocks, the changing of vegetation. All those things are very important to look at and consider when it comes to the security of our food supply.

Once again, just before I clue up, I'd like to thank all of my constituents, all of my campaign workers, my family especially for supporting me in getting elected in my political efforts. I look forward to serving here in this House and providing, not only a benefit to the people of my district, but the people of the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to stand here today with my colleagues wearing purple today in honour of International Women's Day and the great women that are in all of our lives. I'd just like to say a big thank

you to them, but also my colleagues here in the House of Assembly on both sides of the aisle and at the Table here in front of us and our Pages in the House for the great work they do and thank them for this day about them. Thank you very much for everything you do.

Mr. Chair, I'm also very happy to stand and talk about Interim Supply for a lot of reasons because it gives us the opportunity to hear about the many success stories that are happening in everybody's districts. For me that's an important piece, because I get to hear about districts like St. George's - Humber and the activity that's happening out in those districts. It's great for us to hear those great stories and for the people who are listening at home to hear those great stories.

I'm going to take some time to go through some of the success stories this government has brought forward in the last year and what we plan on bringing forward in the next several months while we're doing this Interim Supply and interim budget.

As my colleague from St. George's - Humber had alluded to, the Interim Supply debate allows us to grant certain monies through the government to allow activity to continue on in government while we're passing our budget, which sometimes takes a little longer than we would like but we have to make sure we get it right and we have to make sure everyone has the opportunity to ask questions during Estimates and ask questions of government to ensure that the money is being spent wisely.

I'm just going to highlight a few initiatives that are happening in St. John's in particular. Mr. Chair, we've committed to over \$10 million to construct new electrical substations to service the Health Sciences Centre and Memorial University; \$7.5 million to advance the replacement of the Waterford Hospital.

As my hon. colleague mentioned earlier, that's a very, very old building. Queen Victoria was on the throne I think when it was built in the middle 1800s and it's in dire need of replacement. I'm proud to be part of a team and this government for not just talking about health care problems but taking action to make sure they don't happen in the future; \$3.1 million to continue upgrades

to the medical device reprocessing area at the Health Sciences Centre; \$700,000 for integrated operating rooms in St. John's alone; \$2.4 million to complete East Point Elementary and replace the older Virginia Park Elementary. That's a worthwhile. If anybody hasn't had the pleasure to visit East Point Elementary School – I know my hon. colleague on the other side of the House, or on the same side of the House as me can't wait for Coley's Point to be done as well.

More importantly, we're very happy to have the state-of-the-art facility. I would encourage anyone in this House to go down and see how happy it's made the students and the faculty and staff and the community as a whole for that area.

One of the things that's also neat that's happened in the last couple of weeks is the Minister of Transportation and Works has brought forward the tenders to demolish the old Virginia Park Elementary, which is on the site. It will allow the site in the summer to progress with redesign for parking lots, safe places for kids to play and redesign the whole landscape in the area, which will be a big thing. It's a bittersweet moment for the people in the community because Virginia Park Elementary had played a vital role in raising many of the kids and working with the kids and community in that area. We're happy that it's going to be well landscaped and good activity for the kids in that area.

\$21.2 million to advance construction of the Team Gushue Highway extension; this is a very, very important extension for the transportation network within our city. It's been dragged on for entirely too long and we're trying to move that forward as fast as we can. This will improve the traffic flow all around the City of St. John's and relieve some of the congestion that we face in the city.

Mr. Chair, a \$500,000 investment to begin the construction of a new court complex in St. John's; \$450,000 in renovations to the Family Court division in St. John's; \$195,000 in renovations to the Supreme Court Trial Division in St. John's; and \$100,000 to continue the planning for a value-for-money analysis of a replacement for HMP. Anybody who's had the ability or the opportunity to go see HMP like I have, it definitely needs to be redone and we

definitely need a new penitentiary in this province.

We all know the needs of the facilities and the huge benefit that improvements made to these facilities have on the people that have to use them and the entire judicial system. These four investments are very positive impacts for the citizens in our province, not just in the city as well.

\$1.6 million for accessibility improvements to the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre; this is a great investment to ensure everyone in our community has equal access to the very talented people who put performances on in the Arts and Culture Centre during each and every year.

Mr. Chair, it's hard not to touch on health and the well-being of people when you're talking about our budget. The health spending is approximately \$2.9 billion, which accounts for the largest share of our spending in our budget. We must do things differently. I'm proud to be part of a government that has been able to virtually maintain that line stagnant, making sure that the last two budgets we had virtually no increases to the budget.

This is not the case under the previous administration where health spending went up 130 per cent since 2001 to 2015 and the outcomes were no better, if not worse. We had some colleagues talk about mental health and addictions, which is a major problem in our communities. Our government is committed to \$5 million to advance the All-Party Committee recommendations, which is also being supported by \$1.4 million in federal funding. We have to do things different and find better ways of doing things, Mr. Chair, and that's what we're trying to do.

On January 19, 2017, the Psychiatric Assessment Unit was announced to be re-developed. The Psychiatric Assessment Unit is a place in the Waterford in St. John's which will be re-developed to improve patient experience and enhance the care. We listened and we delivered.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is investing \$650,000 in a project that will provide for renovating the space and

increase staffing, which will include an additional registered nurse position as well. The Psychiatric Assessment Unit is the only dedicated emergency room for mental health issues in our province.

In December of 2017, new long-term care beds and advancement to the mental health care were among the 2017 successes that we've had. Advances in mental health and addictions, acute care and long-term care facilities, infrastructure, home and community care supports and forward-thinking legislation are just a few of those initiatives that we made over the last year.

After six months, 51 of the 54 recommendations in *Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* are either completed or in progress of being completed. Construction on the new 164-bed hospital in Corner Brook is underway and approximately 360 long-term care beds will be added to the system and new construction announced for Corner Brook, Grand Falls and Gander. These announcements were made multiple times in some cases by the previous administration. They talked. We delivered.

A total of 28 more long-term care beds will be opened in Carbonear in the new year. I know the hon. colleague on our side of the House will love that. The Enhanced Care in Personal Care Homes is now a permanent care option, allowing for results to be successful.

Newfoundland and Labrador Opioid Action Plan has been implemented and is helping to address the increased number of overdoses and deaths caused by opioids, including fentanyl. I happen to sit on the fentanyl task force, which is working in partnership with the City of St. John's trying to address some of those concerns and find concrete examples on how we can help the problems that we're having in the community. We've had multiple meetings and we're continuing to meet and come up with solutions that we can both partner on and hopefully make those changes here in this city that we can copy and replicate right across the Island and then for other centres. Stay tuned for that and hopefully we'll be able to move forward on those rather quickly.

I could go on and on and on about the investments in mental health, and hopefully I'll get some more time to do that as the debate develops, but I'd just like to say thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chair. I'll take my seat.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would 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 (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

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 Chair of the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and asked him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

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: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Given the hour of the day, I would move, seconded by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 o'clock.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.