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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We'd like to welcome everybody back to another week in the House of Assembly. In the Speaker's gallery today I would like to welcome Sandra and Con Milmore. They are from the District of Mount Pearl North and they will be acknowledged in a Member's statement today.

Welcome to you both.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear Members' statements from the Districts of Mount Pearl - Southlands, Mount Pearl North, Burin - Grand Bank, and Harbour Main.

We may have a fifth statement, stand by for that, but right now the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize the accomplishments of 12 individuals who have given their time and talents to the sport of hockey in the City of Mount Pearl.

Five of these individuals: Jim Keough, Jim Alyward, Paul Billard, Charlie Stevens and Nita Pope have been inducted into the Mount Pearl Minor Hockey Hall of Fame in the category of builder. Five others: Noel Keough, Ted Pearson, Glen Neil, Roger McGrath and the late Cliff Ralph in the player category. Wally Ball in the official category and Dave Murphy as an official and builder.

Hockey, like many other sports, provides tremendous benefits to youth, not only from a health and wellness perspective, but also in providing lifelong lessons such as the value of hard work and commitment and working as part of a team. Through the tireless efforts and unwavering commitment of these Hall of Fame inductees, many young people in my community have benefited from both a physical and a social

point of view and have gone on to be very healthy, well-rounded and productive citizens.

I would therefore ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in commending these individuals for their contribution to this great sport and on congratulating them on being inducted into the Mount Pearl Minor Hockey Hall of Fame.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mount Pearl's most recent Citizen of the Year.

In a recent ceremony at the Reid Centre, Sandra Milmore was awarded the Richard Levandier Award for the 2017 Mount Pearl Citizen of the Year. Congratulations, Sandra, on this well-deserved accomplishment.

Through her volunteer activities, Sandra has improved the lives of many citizens of Mount Pearl. Just a few of her valuable endeavours include the Canada 150 Local Hero Award in 2017. Also in 2017, Sandra, and her husband, Con Milmore, were named the Knights of Columbus Father John B. Kent Council Family of the Year. She is the president of Saint Vincent de Paul's Newfoundland and Labrador Council and president of the Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary. Sandra volunteers for Mount Pearl City Days, the Frosty Festival and coordinates Mount Pearl's Seniors lunch and bingo programs.

I would also like to thank the award nominators and congratulate the other nominees, Bren Rumsey and Stephen Thistle.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Sandra Milmore and thanking her for all she has done for our community through her tireless volunteer efforts and outstanding contributions over the years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Burin - Grand Bank.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we are well aware, the seas off our coast, though for centuries have provided us with bounty, oftentimes have given up that bounty reluctantly. Those who take to the sea to earn a living are often faced with horrific conditions – conditions that threaten and have taken many lives. However, Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have the Canadian Coast Guard at the ready to take the call when jeopardy is near.

On February 22, several members of the Canadian Coast Guard were honoured at Government House when the Lieutenant-Governor, on behalf of the Governor General of Canada, presented them with Exemplary Service Medals. Among those acknowledged were two individuals who reside in Fortune, Mr. Speaker: William Skinner, a neighbour of mine and Peter Parsons, who happens to be my uncle.

Although 20 years of service is a requirement for this medal, service time is not the key consideration when deciding recipients. It is a medal reserved for those who demonstrate a high level of leadership, Mr. Speaker, dedication and passion for the job.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the recipients and thank them once again for all they do to protect their fellow mariners.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am overjoyed today to rise in this hon. House and recognize Ms. Mary Flynn on the occasion of her 100th birthday. She is watching from home today. Family, friends and members of the community joined in celebrating this special milestone. I was pleased to have been able to join with her as part of this celebration.

Born in 1918, Aunt Mary is known throughout the community of Clarke's Beach as a very humble and down-to-earth lady with a one-of-a-kind sense of humour. For over 65 years she sang in the church choir, and has over the years shared the gift of music and song.

Still living independently in her own home during the summer months, but spending winters with her family, she plays cards four or five nights a week, loves nothing more than a good old fashion waltz and caps off each day with a glass of whisky.

The love and faith she shows to everybody is simply remarkable, and it is the same love and faith that has enabled her to have lived such a fulfilling life.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in sending 100th birthday wishes to Aunt Mary and wish her many more years of good health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: And before we move on, I would like to recognize a former Member of this House of Assembly, Mr. Stelman Flynn.

Please send a welcome to our former colleague.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I must say, I probably had four notes passed to me since you walked in. So you must realize it's very difficult to sneak into these premises. Thank you.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday I had the pleasure of attending the Central Regional meeting of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador in Grand Falls-Windsor to announce \$567,000 to support the Welcoming Communities-

WelcomeNL Initiative, and a partnership with MNL.

This funding will enable MNL to implement WelcomeNL throughout the province, beginning this year in Labrador City, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Corner Brook, and in 2019 expanding to Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander.

Mr. Speaker, Welcoming Communities promotes the integration and retention of newcomers to the province with individuals and organizations working together to provide services and supports to help them feel at home. By promoting diversity and multiculturalism these communities aim to attract and retain new residents, encouraging social, cultural and economic growth.

As part of this initiative, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador has also launched the WelcomeNL toolkit and website. This dynamic online resource will assist municipalities in better understanding their role in promotion of immigrant attraction and retention and the benefits of immigration.

The Welcoming Communities Initiative is a key priority in *The Way Forward* on Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador, the province's collaborative, partnership-driven immigration action plan to increase immigration to 1,700 newcomers annually by 2022.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of hon. colleagues to join me in encouraging municipalities across our province to become welcoming communities and to learn more by visiting welcomenl.ca.

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 hon. minister for a copy of his statement. Increasing the population of this province is vital to our future. The retention of newcomers is imperative. Partnering with MNL can lead to great opportunities for all regions of this province.

This side of the House overwhelmingly supports this initiative because the Welcoming Communities partnership with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador is the key action of the former administration's Population Growth Strategy I have here in my hand.

Of course, this was back in a time where population was increasing, the economy was strong and taxes weren't through the roof. Regardless, I'm more than pleased to see the government realize the benefits of our population growth and I'm hoping, for the sake of the province, to see positive results.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This is a really important initiative and I'm glad that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador is spearheading it, and I'm glad the government is supporting that.

We know from surveys that the most important retention factor is finding a job. We have to make sure that we are creating an environment where there is employment for newcomers. Secure employment is key to making people want to stay and increasing our retention rates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Saturday evening, my beautiful daughter and I were pleased to attend Sport Newfoundland and Labrador's 11th annual Stars and Legends Gala. I rise today to recognize the award winners and the Hall of Fame inductees.

The 2018 award recipients are: Senior Female Athlete of the Year: Heather Healey (Baseball); Senior Male Athlete of the Year: Liam Hickey (Sledge hockey/Wheelchair basketball); Junior Female Athlete of the Year: Maggie Connors (Hockey); Junior Male Athlete of the Year: Campbell Clarke (Rugby); Executive of the Year: Kevin Higgins (Baseball); Volunteer of the Year: David Coates (Baseball); Coach of the Year: Peter Densmore (Rugby); Team of the Year – no surprise – Team Gushue (Curling); Official of the Year: Scott Critch (Basketball).

This year's Newfoundland and Labrador Sport Hall of Fame inductee are: Laura Breen in the Athlete category (Soccer); Benedict Dunne in the Athlete/Builder category (Track & Field, Soccer); John McGrath in the Builder category (Soccer); John Slaney in the Athlete category (Hockey).

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank provincial sport organizations and the many athletes, coaches, managers, parents and volunteers who support participation and excellence in sport at every level.

I would also like to congratulate and thank Sport Newfoundland and Labrador for hosting this prestigious event again this year.

Through their achievements, these great athletes not only bring pride to their communities and our province, but also promote healthy active living. Through *The Way Forward*, our government has made a number of commitments aimed at supporting participation in sport, recreation and healthy active living.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating this year's honourees for their hard work, dedication and tremendous contribution to amateur sport in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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. Mr. Speaker, it is truly encouraging to see that the level of athleticism in this province

continues to grow, as our athletes make us proud when they compete on the world stage.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'd to congratulate the 2018 Stars and Legends award recipients and this year's Newfoundland and Labrador's Sport Hall of Fame inductees. Being awarded these accolades are true accomplishments which we should all be proud of.

To Heather Healey, Liam Hickey, Maggie Connors, Campbell Clarke, Kevin Higgins, David Coates, Peter Densmore, Team Gushue and Scott Critch, I offer my congratulations and encouragement.

I'd also like to recognize Laura Breen, Benedict Dunne, John McGrath and John Slaney on their induction into the Newfoundland and Labrador Sport Hall of Fame.

The culture of sport in this province has never been stronger. I thank all of the coaches, managers, volunteers and parents who support our athletes and look forward to future success in sport.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I'm happy to join with her in recognizing these wonderful individuals who are not just athletes, but who are also an active part of their communities, and the minister mentioned that.

We must do all we can to support athletes and those who support them and ensure that all young people have adequate opportunities to participate in sport and physical activities. I know the minister made reference to programs and we have to increase those programs, especially within our school system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and our province's entire agricultural community, I'd like to commemorate the life of Arthur Gill, a true pioneer, innovator and entrepreneur in our province's agricultural industry. Sadly, Mr. Gill passed away too soon on Wednesday, April 18, at the age of 88 years young. I wish to offer condolences to Mr. Gill's family and friends, his daughter, Janice Gill, who proudly continues to hold her father's torch and is a manager in the Agriculture and Lands Branch of the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources, and we thank her for her work.

No stranger to hard work, Art Gill and his wife Vanda were the first to acquire and clear land for farming in Wooddale in Central Newfoundland in the 1960s – no small feat of that day, and they didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. In 1969, Art Gill took over his father-in-law's dairy farm in Bishop's Falls and relocated it to nearby Wooddale. He continued to expand, and today Mr. Gill's farm is a beef, sheep, forage and cranberry operation – a going concern, if ever there was one.

Ever the pioneer, Arthur Gill was the first farmer in the province to successfully grow alfalfa and grain to feed his dairy herd. Mr. Gill was also renowned for his outstanding knowledge of soil fertility and crop production, and was a proven leader in the province's dairy industry.

Mr. Speaker, Art Gill's contribution to this province's farming community continues to inspire, to set the bar high for what we can achieve through hard work, through perseverance, dedication and through innovation. Please join me in recognizing a life in agriculture, a life truly well lived.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition joins with government in recognizing the contributions of Mr. Arthur Gill as someone who spent his entire life in the agriculture industry. I understand and sincerely appreciate the hard work, perseverance and dedication that is required to be as successful as the Gill family.

I take my hat off to Mr. Gill and thank him for what he has done for the industry, helping to build it from its early days into what it is today. I had the personal reward of meeting Mr. Gill on several occasions. The first time I ever met him, I was still in diapers. He actually came to my grandfather's farm to talk about dairy cows, about registering his herd. Right up until Mr. Gill retired from the dairy industry, he maintained one of the only registered Holstein herds in the province.

Our agriculture industry could be the lifeline in many of our rural communities. It provides employment as well as valuable contributions to our province's well-being and future plans of food security.

I encourage the government to continue to increase its support to the industry and the new entrants such as the government did when Art Gill was a new entrant back in the '60s. These new entrants of today will accept the torch from individuals like Mr. Gill and continue to grow a vital industry in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm pleased to join with the minister in extending condolences to the family of Arthur Gill.

With today's renewed interest in agriculture, I think he is the perfect role model for young people entering the industry. Arthur Gill had energy, imagination and ambition – qualities which led him to the success he and his family enjoyed. He showed the next generation of farmers, through his life's work, how it's done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, my questions today will begin for the Premier. The questions I ask are, what I believe to be, very important. I ask them with great seriousness but I believe they need to be asked.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier if he can confirm if any harassment or bullying-related complaints have been filed or made to his office by any Member or Members of his caucus or his Cabinet.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will certainly answer that question. Before I do, I will say that it's very obvious and evident by the actions of this government that we take this issue very seriously. We have a number of committees that are made up of senior Cabinet Members that we have in our Cabinet that are participating in those committees.

I have also spoken out, both nationally and provincially, many times on this issue. We now have a new harassment policy in place within government. It will be fully implemented by June of this year, Mr. Speaker. No, there have been no allegations that have come to me on any issue facing our caucus or Cabinet Members.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I appreciate the Premier referring to change in policy. It's been a good and important amount of work. My question was about – and I want to be clear on this – if any Members of his caucus or Cabinet have made any form of harassment or bullying complaints to him as the Premier or to any Member of his staff. It's a very clear question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I think I've answered that question.

No, there has not been, Mr. Speaker. I have not received any allegations or complaints from Members of this caucus or my Cabinet. I have made that quite clear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the Premier – and I know that he has said himself that addressing harassment is a leadership issue.

I ask the Premier: What's the process to deal with harassment or a bullying complaint if one was to be made? He says there has not been any complaint made by any Member of his caucus or his Cabinet.

I ask him: What would be the process if someone was to make a complaint about bullying or harassment regarding any Member of his Cabinet or his caucus, to him or to his office? What's the process, Premier?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well that process I think was clearly outlined just a few weeks ago when we developed and announced the harassment policies within government, and there were a number of initiatives that were there. The steps were all outlined. They are all there for the public record.

Mr. Speaker, these policies are well documented, and I think the Member opposite has spoken quite clearly on that. So we've been – as I said, these policies, the guidelines are now in place, Mr. Speaker, and there has been no harassment allegations that have been made to me, and I will say that once again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I just noticed at the end of the last question, he said there have been no allegations made to him.

Has there been any allegations made to your staff, Premier?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, no. No, there's not. I have outlined very clearly the policies and the procedures that would be within our government. I could go on and give examples of within his own caucus, but I'm not going to go there.

This is an important issue, Mr. Speaker, facing this province and we have made our position, I have made my position quite clear by putting a new policy in place. Not to overly politicize this, but this is a government opposite and individuals asking these questions that had every opportunity in the past to do so, but we have taken action on this, Mr. Speaker.

As I've mentioned, we have senior Cabinet ministers who are participating in many committees right now. As a matter of fact, just recently through a private Member's resolution in this House, we had all MHAs that sit in these seats and clearly have voted in favour of further changes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women if she has received, or is she aware of any written or verbal or otherwise, aware of any complaints with respect to harassment or bullying that's been experienced within her own caucus by any minister in the Cabinet?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I take this question very seriously. I think in any harassment, any bullying, any violence or any of the like kind has to be addressed, has to be addressed quickly.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any circumstance. It has not been raised to me at all privately or otherwise, but I do encourage the Member, if he's aware of something that he needs to come forward with, I think he should do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the minister if he could release an assessment of what the average family in Newfoundland with two small children will pay in extra costs for food, clothing and other necessities as a result of the trickle-down effect of the carbon tax.

Last week he could not. Can he today?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I made it quite clear on many occasions that the carbon plan that we will be presenting in the very near future to this province will outline all the effects to Newfoundland and Labrador. The money that we have from the federal government and the

province has put in for new initiatives, for green initiatives in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I'll say to the Member, when we roll out the plan, all the initiatives that will be involved, all the effects of the carbon tax to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but I'm just glad of one thing, that the Member finally realizes that this is a federal carbon tax for all provinces and Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we have done in this province, Mr. Speaker, we said we will do what we can, a plan for Newfoundland and Labrador to fit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, which will include the offshore, which will include major industries, which are major employers in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That plan will be rolled out in the very near future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've been waiting for the made in Newfoundland and Labrador approach that protects the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The federal tax, but the provincial government needs to stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Your government is bringing in a new tax that everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador will have to pay.

How much will the new carbon tax cost residents and households in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

MR. JOYCE: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I just have to clarify the preamble, that this is a federal carbon tax. It's not a tax that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is bringing in. It's a federal tax imposed on all provinces and territories in Canada.

As I told the Member on many occasions, and I'll say it again, when we roll out the plan and when we look at all the initiatives and roll out, there's already a lot of ideas brought in on how we can use some of the funds that the federal government, the \$44 million – we're matching the \$44 million, Mr. Speaker, for green initiatives of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We'll roll out the plan. We'll be upfront, and as we said earlier, the extra money on the gas tax will be eliminated when the carbon tax is brought in.

Mr. Speaker, we will make a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador to fit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so we can help grow the economy, the green economy, in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, are you meeting the targets from large industry covered under your *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act*?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, as we said earlier, the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador is vital to all the provinces and some of the bigger industries. We will be working with all industries, all the offshore companies, to do what we can to help mitigate whatever concerns they may have, to work with them.

There are targets that are set, Mr. Speaker. We will be trying to reach the targets to the best of our ability. There are backstops put in from the federal government, so we have to try to meet up to those backstops. If we don't get to those backstops, they will fill it. We have to try to work with a plan so that if we don't do it, to have a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador plan, they will come in and backstop it.

That's our goal is to ensure that we do what's best for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians,

what's best for the offshore. Mr. Speaker, we will lay out that plan in the very near future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind the minister the offshore is not part of the Greenhouse Gas Act. Those five industries, on-land industries – we've asked that question: What about the offshore? Maybe we'll get some details later on.

What are the latest results of your greenhouse gas monitoring at the Holyrood facility?

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

MR. JOYCE: I never heard the question, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, if he could just speak up a bit. I never heard it, sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, what are the latest results of your greenhouse gas monitoring at the Holyrood facility?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Holyrood, as we know, is a part of the whole broad that we have to look at for all of the industry that we have to keep in place. Once again, there are put in place – and it is part of it.

What we have to do for the Holyrood monitoring site, Mr. Speaker, there are some – what they put in and we have to decide what we can do dealing with the industry. What we're working at is working with the industry to help mitigate whatever pain they may have to save jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm sure the Member opposite is going to say we should work with the industry to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we reduce any impact whatsoever to save jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yeah, I do appreciate jobs but we have to protect our environment too.

Will greenhouse gas be reduced at the Holyrood facility?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, of course the targets are set and we'll all be working with Holyrood to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and that's a part of it, Mr. Speaker, for all industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. We all signed on to that so, yes, greenhouse gases will be – we just have to find a way that we can do it in a way to keep employment and help with all the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. So yes, we'll be working with Holyrood to reduce emissions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I ask you: Will Nalcor be paying a carbon tax for the Holyrood facility in 2019? If so, how much will Nalcor have to pay?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member has asked an awful lot of questions of a nature, about the plan and the process by which this province will address the climate change issue. My hon. colleague has done tremendous work in this area. He will be announcing a policy very, very soon.

As the Member opposite knows, the idea behind the Muskrat Falls Project was to introduce more carbon neutral and green energy to this province.

It will move from 80 per cent to 98 per cent of renewable energy of this province as that project comes on stream and the closure of Holyrood takes place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister, Holyrood wasn't included in the Greenhouse Gas Act, that's what we're asking. It's still open, still operational and this tax is coming next year, so I think it's a very valid question.

What reduction in greenhouse gas emissions do you expect with your carbon tax?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, we're going on estimation. The first year for the greenhouse is about 80,000 tons; the second year is about 134,000 tons.

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

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

Minister, you said you were surprised to hear this weekend about the New Harbour fish plant closing.

Have you reached out to see what other plants will not operate this year?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, we certainly were very, very surprised and disturbed to hear that a company would use, on a Friday afternoon or a Friday evening, a notification period to inform its workers that it would no longer be operating the plant for the coming season.

It would be our expectation that under whatever circumstances that may be affecting our fisheries

resources off our coast, whatever federal decisions have been taken to reduce stocks that all within the industry abide by what we understand to be a social contract, a social licence, that we treat our workers, the very workers who are the success of this company, we them with respect and we provide them with due notice of any intention, any information available.

And I have definitely reached out, not only to this company but to the entire seafood processing industry of Newfoundland and Labrador to come forward with any information of any operational plans which would be affecting working in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

With the reduction in both the shrimp and crab quota this year, and the low catch rates so far, do you expect a reduction in the hours for plant workers this year, and do you anticipate any more closures in plants?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, there were significant reductions, quota reductions on all coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that obviously will have economic impacts on our industry. It is too early to tell exactly what those impacts will be. We're monitoring them very, very closely.

It's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, we, our government, has taken the path of increasing value, promoting value, promoting the economic benefit of value and the jobs of value added to be able to support our workers, our communities and our industry when, in times of reduced quotas, we can still maintain an economic threshold, an increased economic impact by expanding on value.

I'd ask the hon. Members, the folks on this side, and including that side, to help us in that effort.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Coming from a minister that let go 25 per cent of surf clam quota to New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, have any of the operating licences for fish processing not been renewed in this year's department?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, all requests for licence renewals have been honoured, but I would ask the hon. Member, if that's the way he wants to go: Could he explain what happened in 2006 in Fortune? Could he explain what happened in 2007 in Port aux Basques and Trouty? Can he explain what happened in 2009 in Englee? Can he explain what happened in 2010 in Gaultois? Can he explain in 2012 what happened in Jackson's Arm, Little Bay Islands, Port Union, Marystown, St. Lewis, Black Tickle and St. Bride's?

Can he explain what happened in 2013 in Hant's Harbour, Jackson's Arm in the crab plant there, and in Burin? Can he explain what happened in 2015 in Burnt Islands?

Mr. Speaker, there are circumstances in our fishery which are not necessarily in the control of the communities or its workers. What we do ask is that we all work together to respond to this crisis. Our government is prepared to stand up for the fish plant workers of the community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Well, given they've been governing for two years, I think it's about time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LESTER: In recent media comments, the current minister indicated that the chair and members of Mistaken Point Cape Race Heritage Inc., the group that operates the interpretation centre that serves as a gateway to Mistaken Point UNESCO site – it is said by the minister that the volunteer organization has not made their need for additional funding clear.

Minister, are you aware that this group met with the former minister, with senior officials in your department in April 2017 following your budget and asked for an additional \$75,000 to operate the facility?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, what I am aware is the amount of funding that's being provided to Mistaken Point Cape Race Heritage association is the exact same amount of funding that has been provided since 2013.

What I am also aware is, I am concerned that there is a misrepresentation being made by the hon. Member that Mistaken Point may close. It's been stated before in the House that Mistaken Point is in question as to whether or not it may operate this year. Nothing could be further from the truth, because as we know, Mr. Speaker, it is the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that operates, that maintains and runs the site of Mistaken Point. It is an ecological reserve within our boundaries. We provide \$400,000 a year and nine staff to make sure that that site will continue to operate in 2018, and we guarantee that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: The issue in question is the interpretation site, the gateway which is part of the UNESCO heritage requirements to maintain its designation. That's what we're concerned with. I do believe I can quote the chair of the Mistaken Point Cape Race Heritage saying that it may actually close if it does not get the additional funding.

Minister, this same volunteer group wrote you in November 2017 seeking assistance and an update from your department. This is the only provincially managed UNESCO site in the province.

Why didn't you and your department respond to this group operating the site?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, we have responded to the group. In fact, we lease that space within the Edge of Avalon Interpretation site. We provide just over \$26,000 a year in lease fees. We have two offices there, approximately 390 square feet. Plus, we also additionally supply some supports to the common areas.

We supply \$26,100 per year in lease fees to ensure that that interpretation centre stays open. We staff it. We actually make sure the staff, the nine personnel that are employed by the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources work out of that building and provide support for the interpretation, but we also provide \$15,000 a year which is the exact same amount of money that was provided by the previous government to ensure that association remains open.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: In the meeting of April last year the group also provided recent budgets which outlined expenditures, revenues and what was required to keep the site operating.

Have you reviewed these documents?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, the site remains operational because it is a provincial government site. It will be maintained by the provincial government as per the agreements. It is maintained because we provide over \$400,000

per year in salaries of provincial government employees who manage and run the site itself and conduct the interpretation facilities.

We provide an additional \$26,000 a year in lease fees to the Mistaken Point Cape Race Heritage association. We provide an additional grant of \$15,000 per year for that heritage society's operations, plus we provide additional students every year, each and every year.

It is a provincial government site, maintained, controlled and run by provincial government employees. Mr. Speaker, please understand, this site will not close any time.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: The site itself has supposedly been there for 350 million years. What we're speaking of is the interpretation centre which is a key element in maintaining the UNESCO designation. That is where the lack of funding occurs.

The management plan indicates the province is the primary source of operational funding. Why is appropriate funding not in place?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, \$26,000 a year in a lease fee, to allow the officials from the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources, is provided each and every year to the building's owner, the Mistaken Point Cape Race Heritage association. We also provide the staff that provides the interpretation of the static sites there. We also provide \$15,000 a year.

I'll ask the hon. Member a very straightforward question: If there was an issue with \$15,000, why did you not, as a government, include an additional amount? That is exactly the amount of money that's been provided to this group since 2013 without deviation or without change. Fifteen thousand dollars a year is provided to support this group.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: The actual difference is the designation. There's working towards the designation, then the designation happens. The Mistaken Point UNESCO management plan states its support for 2016-17 should have been \$500,000.

I ask the minister: Why is the plan not being followed?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, the plan is being followed very, very carefully. The interpretation plan, the actual plan itself, was submitted towards UNESCO.

If there was an issue, the former government failed to identify it. If there was an issue, the former government failed to budget for it. If there was an issue, the former government failed to put that money in the reference. They did not believe at that point in time that further funds were required, because they would have booked those funds for this particular project as part of the overall initiation process to get it as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They did not do that.

We are providing as a government, we are ensuring that this site has the resources to be a world-class facility, a world-class site, and it will maintain its UNESCO designation. That is a guarantee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: In order to maintain its designation it has to be adequately funded.

Is the minister now committing to adequately fund this site?

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

MR. BYRNE: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. This site will be adequately funded.

We have \$400,000 per year, which we provide for staff, which under the agreements would be maintained and controlled by the provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We additionally offer operational and maintenance supports. We had great success last year in getting the road access improved to the site with our federal partners. We have a bridge over Watern Brook that's already been purchased, that's ready to install. We have students ready to come on board and onsite.

We have a number of measures to make sure that this agreement, that this site will maintain its UNESCO World Heritage status. But we'll go one step further, we'll build on those successes and make it an even greater site and ensuring that it has the resources to be able to do what needs to be done, which are already in place, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: (Inaudible) figure of \$400,000, but in 2016-17 it was actually recommended to be \$500,000. I can't understand why you would not follow this plan outlined by the UNESCO management.

Can you assure that in future the Mistaken Point Management Plan is going to be followed? That includes the necessary recommended funding. This is essential to keep the elements required to be met by the four years following the date of inscription. We need to see that these are being met in order to maintain our designation.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for a quick response, please.

MR. BYRNE: I'm not aware of a question there, Mr. Speaker, but I will take the opportunity to highlight the fact that in 2013, their former government, their government, had

a park interpretation program manager, which was referenced by the hon. Member for Ferryland as being unstaffed at this point in time.

What both Members have failed to point out is that position was eliminated in 2013. There have been successive staffing issues that we as a government have had to deal with. This is an important site, and we take it very, very seriously. We will have this site fully staffed in 2018, that's ensured.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, Saturday morning a woman at the Clarenville Correctional Centre for Women passed away. I offer my most sincere condolences to her family and friends. This woman had reached out for help and had been a voluntary patient at the Waterford Hospital before being incarcerated again, after an appeal by the Crown for a longer sentence that she had already served before the appeal was completed.

I ask the minister: What will he do to guarantee a thorough risk assessment was done for this woman and that she got all the help she needed before she was transferred and incarcerated again to Clarenville?

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

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

I can confirm that the RCMP is investigating a fatality at the women's facility in Clarenville from the past weekend. Certainly, all of us, not only in the Department of Justice and Public Safety but in government, offer our condolences to the family.

What I can tell the Member is I will not be discussing the details of this matter in this House at this time right now while there is an investigation ongoing. What I can say is that we've had significant services on site to offer supports to both inmates and staff who dealt

with this tragic incident, and I look forward to the investigation continuing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, in their report *Towards Recovery*, the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made strong recommendations regarding the delivery of mental health and addictions services in correction facilities. Recommendation 17 directs government to "assign responsibility for the provision of health services in prisons and the associated funding to the health and community services system, to improve mental health and addictions services and supports for inmates."

I ask the Premier: What work has been done and what is the status of this recommendation?

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

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

Certainly, I could have taken this question or my colleague, the Minister of Health, was also ready to take this question.

What I can say is that this process is in the works, where the transfer of health services will go from a Justice responsibility to a Health and Community Services responsibility. That work is ongoing. Obviously, it takes some time in order to deal with this, but it's something we've taken seriously, all the recommendations, and that one will be made effective.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In Estimates this morning, the Minister of Natural Resources sounded less optimistic than she has formerly regarding Vale's intention to develop the underground portion of the Voisey's Bay mine, noting all decisions are still on hold.

I ask the minister: What power has she with Vale to hold them to their intention to develop the underground mine?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that Vale has done a global review of its mineral projects and that they have continued to consider going underground at Voisey's Bay. I will say again, and Members opposite have heard me say this repeatedly, that there is a great economic opportunity for them to go underground. Vale has determined that they will go out and do a streaming exercise for cobalt, which means that they are considering their opportunities in Voisey's Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I remain cautiously optimistic, but I will say that there is a development agree. Should Vale determine that it decided not to go underground, we'll be exercising that development agreement and the remedies they are under.

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 invite the minister to table that development agreement so we can see the power that she does have. Mr. Speaker, the minister also confirmed this morning that the open-pit mining operations at Voisey's Bay end in four years.

I ask the minister: What assurances can she give the people of Labrador, especially those employed at the mine, that they will continue to reap the benefits of that resource passed 2022?

Thank you.

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

MS. COADY: I thank the Member opposite for the question – indeed all the questions that I've had about Voisey's Bay and about Vale's intent. Mr. Speaker, Vale has done their global review. They are analyzing how they are going to move forward in Voisey's Bay.

We have had multiple conversations with them, especially to encourage them to go underground. They are proceeding with the streaming of cobalt, which will help fund I think any developments and would ensure that they have a desire to go underground as well, Mr. Speaker.

Commodity prices continue to fluctuate for copper and we are working with Vale to ensure that they see the benefits of going underground and will continue to do so and, hopefully, in the very near future we'll have some positive news about that development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, the following motion:

WHEREAS restorative justice processes are rapidly being adopted within Canada, as well as internationally, as a way of responding to crime and victimization; and

WHEREAS in 2009 the United Nations recommended to adopt basic principles on the

use of restorative justice programs in criminal matters;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urges the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to explore the benefits of adopting restorative justice practices in the province in consultation with outside organizations and Aboriginal groups.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's resolution just entered will be the one that is debated this Wednesday.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

Here are the reasons for the petition that I'm presenting today:

Our licensed child care system is a patchwork of private, for-profit centres – 70 per cent of all the centres – non-profit, community-based centres and family daycare, plus a small number of education and workplace-based centres. It is nowhere near meeting the child care needs in our province. Affordable licensed child care is often in short supply in rural parts of the province. Even in St. John's, there are long wait-lists for quality child care programs.

Child care programs have both social and financial benefits for society. Studies show that high-quality child care and early childhood education programs result in better cognitive language and numeracy skills that help economically disadvantaged children transition to school on the same level as other children.

Investing in child care creates jobs; \$1 million invested in child care would create 40 jobs, more than in any other sector. And that comes from the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council.

A gender-based analysis of the provincial budget would have indicated the need for a public child care program as a key way to close the wage gap between women and men in this province.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly as follows:

We call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate steps to put in place a plan for a gradual transition to a universal regulated, publicly funded and fully accessible child care and after-school care program.

It's really a shame and something we should be ashamed of in this country, Mr. Speaker, that we do not have a national program, as do many other countries in the world, especially in Europe and Scandinavian countries. We should be ashamed as a province that in spite of that, we are not doing what other provinces have done and are doing. Provinces like Quebec, which have shown that a child care program there has been a boost, not just for employment and employment of women but it has actually been a boost for their economy; provinces like PEI, which did put in place a plan to transition from a patchwork quilt, like the one we have, to now a public child care program.

In Ontario, where they're preparing for an election, both the governing party and Opposition parties are putting in place in their platforms very strong positions with regard to child care because they recognize the need for a child care program.

I really beg this government to listen to the voices of people in this province and do what they are asking.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a response, please.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario also has full-day kindergarten; they had it several years before us. The NDP promised it in their election platform and then voted against it here in the House of Assembly. The Member can answer to the voters on that issue.

I'm pleased to say this year we have a historic amount of funding going into early learning and care. Some \$62 million for early learning and child care, specifically, on top of millions of dollars for full-day kindergarten, in addition to new initiatives associated with the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, for early literacy intervention.

We are making great strides in early learning and care. That is in part because of our great relationship with the federal government. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government honoured its pledge to fund public early learning and care. We signed a bilateral agreement with them just before Christmas and now are in receipt of some \$22 million in funding for early learning and child care over the next three years.

I could continue, Mr. Speaker, but we're making great advancements in early learning and child care, no thanks to the Member and her party.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to present this petition to the House.

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

WHEREAS opioid addiction is a very serious problem affecting many individuals and families in our province, and the Bell Island area is no exception; and

WHEREAS the effects of these problems have implications that negatively impact many people, old and young; and

WHEREAS support and treatment programs have been proven to break the cycle of addictions and have helped many into recovery;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to establish a Suboxone-methadone treatment plan for Bell Island, which will include a drug addictions counsellor at the hospital and a drug awareness program in the local school.

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

Mr. Speaker, we've had a multitude of discussions here and have come to an agreement, by all sides of this House, that the opioid epidemic is a major issue that affects everybody, from every age category, from every financial background, from every geographic part of our province. We need to have a collective approach to that. We've taken steps. We're collectively agreeing to take steps to ensure that we move things forward.

We know we have professionals in health care and we know we have agencies that can provide services. We know we have to develop partnerships with our educational institutions. We know the residents and the not-for-profit sector plays an important role here.

Mr. Speaker, when you deal with remote or isolated communities, and particularly an island within the Province of Newfoundland and

Labrador itself has some particular challenges there. For some of our addicts to be able to get the proper treatment, methadone, for example, having to travel from Bell Island to the hospitals here in St. John's or to the clinics to get that becomes not only encompassing, it becomes a very costly process. When you deal with the fact of Mother Nature and the ferry services and these types of things, it has a major impact on their reliability, plus the supports you need to be close at home.

We have a very valuable asset for Eastern Health with the hospital on Bell Island, and there's no reason why we couldn't be providing services. It's not an additional cost. It's a matter of manoeuvring the monies you now have to better fit the need. Right now, unfortunately, there's a demand on Bell Island for addressing these type of issues. When you take the service away from the people and make them have to come to the service it becomes more costly. It becomes more of a restriction and, obviously, it has an impact on the better gain here which is better health.

What we're proposing is that a full dialogue be taken. We encourage the department and the government to work with Eastern Health, any other professionals, to start providing some of these services on Bell Island. Because what we'll say from the economy of scale, it would be by far a better investment. We know the outcomes will be much better and we know the other supports that would be necessary would be hands on, would be in the community that could be supplied and serviced by the community there.

So we're encouraging government to take a serious look at this, provide a plan, develop a plan and put the services in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll get a chance to speak to this again.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

This is the reason for my petition. School aged children are walking to school in areas with no sidewalks, no traffic lights and through areas without crosswalks which is very unsafe for children, it puts them at risk.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the safety of all children by removing the 1.6 busing policy where safety is an ongoing concern.

Mr. Speaker, this is probably the fifth or sixth time that myself and other colleagues here have presented this petition. I understand there's a cost to everything but there's no cost to safety. When it comes to our children and walking along roads, I'll give you an example in my district. Torbay Road has an average of 17,000 cars a day travelling along Torbay Road. As you can understand, there are no sidewalks there. In the wintertime, in particular, it's really dangerous because you're talking probably 10 to 12 inches where children can actually walk with snow and ice and everything else.

Mr. Speaker, it's a major concern. I understand the department and I understand the 1.6 policy but some buses are going to classes and going to the new school there that have a lot of empty seats on it. I'm sure we can work with the schools, school councils in the area, local town councils and everyone to ensure the safety of our children. It's very important that our children get to school safe.

I know there are areas in this province where this won't apply because there's less traffic and stuff like that, but I know it's a major concern on the Northeast Avalon. I know it's a major concern in my area and I want to make sure that children get to school safe.

Also, Mr. Speaker, what's happening in a lot of cases is parents have to drive the children to school. It puts more traffic in our school parking lots where that's a major safety issue also. If we address this where it's necessary for the safety of our children, I think everyone will benefit.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, second reading of Bill 4.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, that Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded the Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act.” (Bill 4)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’m very pleased to stand today as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to give second reading to An Act to Amend the Status of Women Advisory Council Act. Over the next several minutes I will explain why this bill is necessary but, in essence, this bill will improve the appointment process for the president and CEO of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and improve clarity in the language of the act.

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established by the provincial government in 1980, almost 40 years ago. That’s hard to believe that 1980 was almost 40 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

It received legislative standing at that time with the introduction of the *Status of Women Advisory Council Act*. The advisory council was given a very important mandate. It was created with the objective of advising the provincial government on issues affecting the status of women and raising awareness of women’s issues within the general public. This remains the purpose of the advisory council to this day. The advisory council works to ensure that all women throughout the province are thoroughly represented in government programs and policies.

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I rely on the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women to provide sound advice and guidance. I’m very grateful for their continuing dialogue. I meet with them regularly, Mr. Speaker, and I have had cordial and very important discussions with them regarding the many issues that affect the status of women in this province. And to that end, the Advisory Council and its president and CEO, currently, Linda Ross, other staff and council members are highly involved with initiatives of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and they do incredible work.

The Advisory Council moves initiatives forward and holds governments to account. The Advisory Council works to achieve this goal through research and advocacy and by working with governmental and community partners. Some recent examples of this include government’s partnering with the current president and CEO of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women on the Minister of Justice and Public Safety’s Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls.

Linda Ross is the co-chair of that committee – very highly involved – and the committee aims to share information, exchange ideas and come up with actions to support an end to gender-based violence in Newfoundland and Labrador. And we thank her for her ongoing work.

The committee includes a group of government and community representatives who have the experience and knowledge of issues surrounding violence against women and girls, as well as individuals with lived experience.

The committee first met, Mr. Speaker, on December 8, 2017, and as a result government has taken steps to address the concerns brought forward at that meeting, including broadening the definition of violence in the *Family Violence Protection Act* to ensure victims of emotional, psychological and financial violence are also covered by that legislation. That was Bill 1 in the House this session, and it speaks to how serious this government takes this issue.

Ms. Ross was also instrumental recently in addressing a need for changes to the *Schools Act* on February 14 of this year. In a meeting with representatives from the community groups, the Provincial Advisory Council, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Education committed to reviewing the *Schools Act* to ensure it is responsive to the needs of students. At that time, he attributed this change to concerns raised by students and community members.

These are just a few of the recent examples of work completed by the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women which helps to improve the social and economic status of women in our communities.

Throughout the past decade, significant research and work was completed particularly in the areas of restorative justice, women's leadership and human rights, which benefits not only the women of our province, but all people in our province. At any given time, there are a wide range of initiatives in which the Advisory Council is working in tandem with government to represent women and help us to do more for the women and girls of our province.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank Ms. Ross and her team for the work they have contributed, and they have helped to push forward this government. Your efforts will be evident for years and generations to come. And I really thank them for all their efforts, their incredible sincerity in the work they do.

While progress has been made in many areas, there is still much work to be done in order to advance the economic and social status of women in our province. In the past, the president and CEO position has been selected through a process that specifically sought a candidate for

the position. This process involved canvassing and consulting women's organizations eventually resulting in a list of preferred individuals from which the final candidate was selected.

With the creation of the Independent Appointments Commission, the appointment process is now implemented through that body. When beginning the process of searching for new board members and a new president and CEO – which was initiated when Ms. Ross gave us her decision to retire later this year – it was identified by the Independent Appointments Commission that the current wording of the act required the position to be filled from the volunteer board members. If approved, recommended amendments will remove the requirement to appoint from the existing 11 members and will enable the Independent Appointments Commission to recruit for the president and CEO position through a separate process.

To be clear, the proposed changes will not alter the current functioning of the Advisory Council. Rather, it would allow the Advisory Council to proceed as it does now, that is with a paid, full-time president and CEO position which will be appointed through the Independent Appointments Commission.

The *Status of Women Advisory Council Act*, the act that governs the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, outlines the duties of the Provincial Advisory Council, the process of appointments of members and other relevant information about the function and accountability of the council. Included in the act is a description of the duties of the president and CEO, as well as details as how this position is appointed.

Currently, subsection 8(1), (2) and (3) of the act states: “8. (1) The Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint from the 11 members, a president and vice-president of the advisory council.

“(2) The president is the chief executive officer of the advisory council and shall direct the activities of the advisory council and coordinate its work.

“(3) Notwithstanding section 7, the president shall be paid an annual salary.”

There are three points that this subsection addresses in relation to the role of the president and CEO: the appointment process, the duties of the president and the annual salary. This subsection includes the crux of why we are seeking to amend this legislation. I will speak first about the appointment of the president and CEO.

Subsection 8(1) state that the president must be appointed from the 11 members, and they are volunteers, of the Advisory Council. Advisory Council members are volunteers. Section 7 of the act confirms this, as it states: “Members of the advisory council shall serve without reimbursement other than (a) remuneration for those meetings of the advisory council that a member attends that may be prescribed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council; and (b) disbursements for expenses necessarily incurred by a member in connection with the work of the advisory council, that may be prescribed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.” The act is clear that these are volunteer positions. They do not receive a salary.

When members of the public apply to represent women as members of the Advisory Council, they are applying for a volunteer board role, and it is not their intention to apply for a full-time staff position.

And we certainly do appreciate – I’m going to just take a moment, Mr. Speaker – all those that come forward in any capacity with the independent advisory commission, to put their names forward. Many of our board positions are voluntary, like as is this one, Mr. Speaker. The fact that there are so many who come forward, put their names forward, certainly a commendation to the volunteers in this province, and certainly appreciate the hard work and extra efforts that they give to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

To appoint a president and CEO from this pool of volunteer applicants would not be appropriate, and that has not been done in the past. It has not been the way that position has been filled. Filling the role of the president and CEO with the right person is vitally important.

We need to build upon the work that we have been doing with the Advisory Council and all our Status of Women Councils.

We can only do that if we have the right person and the right woman in the job in that position; professional, full-time, carrying on the important works. That person must have a number of characteristics. She must be a collaborator; she must be capable of partnering with diverse stakeholders, including the provincial government and organizations throughout the province. The president and CEO of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women must know how to advocate for women and bring issues to government’s attention and move them forward.

And finally, the president and CEO must commit to doing this full time. We need to continue to have a president and CEO as a full-time position. Anything less would be watering down the mandate of this very important role. Therefore, the following substitutions are proposed: 4.(1) “The advisory council shall consist of the president and 10 persons appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.... A member whose term of office has expired shall continue to be a member until a successor is appointed.”

“8.(1) The Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a person to be the president of the advisory council.... 9.(1) The Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a vice-president from the persons appointed under subsection 4(1). (2) Where the president is unable to exercise the powers and duties of president, the vice-president shall act in place of the president and subsection 8(3) applies to the vice-president as the most appropriate in the circumstances.”

These changes allow for a separation of the roles of a volunteer council member and the paid professional president. While the president will remain a council member, the president will no longer be appointed from the 11 members. Instead, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a person to the president of the Advisory Council.

Subsection 9(1) and (2) refer to the role of the vice-president and the responsibility of the vice-

president when the president is unable to exercise her powers and duties. In particular, it states that subsection 8(3), which refers to the salary of the president, will apply to the vice-president, as appropriate under these circumstances. This change reflects the volunteer nature of the vice-president's role and the fact that the vice-president may not be able to take on this role full time.

Beyond this, there are two other housekeeping amendments also required in the act. First, several terms used in sections 4, 8 and 9 were not previously defined and they should be defined. It is proposed to amend the definition section of the act to include those definitions.

Under 1.1 in the act, these definitions include: "(a) 'advisory council' means the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women - Newfoundland and Labrador continued under section 2; (b) 'member' means a person appointed under subsection 4(1) and the president; (c) 'minister' means the minister designated by order of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to be the minister responsible for the status of women; and (d) 'president' means the person appointed under section 8." All other definitions in this section will remain the same.

Secondly, section 4(4) was amended to delete the word "appointed," as it was the only time that the word "appointed" appears before the word "member" in the act.

Mr. Speaker, we know that now more than ever we need a president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women who's eager, enthusiastic, will act on the issues of importance of women in this province. We know we need a strong president because the women of our province still, in 2018, encounter barriers not faced to the same degree by men in our province; this includes economic, social and violence-related barriers.

For example, women in Newfoundland and Labrador earn 66 per cent of what men earn. Women are still responsible for the majority of unpaid care, Mr. Speaker, including child care and senior care. Approximately 5 per cent of women over the age of 15 will experience at least one incident of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime.

That is why, along with the support of our government, that our government provides to the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, we also fund 10 Violence Prevention Newfoundland and Labrador organizations, eight women's centres, the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, Transition Houses throughout the province and many other organizations which work every day to help advance the status of women in our beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to say thank you to all those involved in that hard work. They are diligent in their efforts, Mr. Speaker, to address the concerns of violence against women and are diligent in their concerns to ensure the status of women is equal to that of men in this province.

I also want to recognize and thank – I know last week was Volunteer Week, but I want to take the opportunity to recognize all the volunteers. Many, many, many people volunteer for these organizations, give willingly of their time, their attention and their skills, Mr. Speaker. We can't thank them enough for the efforts they make in our community.

It is because of this work why we established a committee of ministers representing multiple departments that has been tasked with addressing the issues of violence in our province. Mr. Speaker, this committee oversees collective actions to address issues of violence in our province.

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I had the privilege of chairing this committee. It also consists of Ministers of Justice and Public Safety, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Community Services, Children, Seniors and Social Development, Service NL and Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. You can see, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of ministers from this government have come together to collectively work to ensure we address the concerns about violence against women.

Through these efforts, we are ensuring the voices of those experiencing violence or harassment are heard when we are updating any program or policy throughout government. We are committed to providing safe learning and work environments for everyone, but especially girls and women. Currently, legislation and policies including the Safe & Caring Schools Policy, the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Municipalities Act* are being reviewed to that end.

By examining current policies and programs and legislations, we are able to work to address root causes. We accomplish this through initiatives such as the mental health and addictions initiatives, including implementing recommendations from *Towards Recovery*, a report by the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, housing, including the upcoming provincial housing plan to end homelessness, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy and other measures to reduce income inequality.

As a government, we have put a strong focus on preventing and eliminating violence and we plan to continue on this path. In the coming months, we will build and grow our current violence prevention activities and work towards ensuring we have a responsive approach for the coming years. However, we cannot do this alone. Ending violence requires a collective response, and it is not the work of any one committee, community group or government department. Our government works in collaboration with community stakeholders to find long-term solutions to eradicate violence.

We hope that these changes to the *Status of Women Advisory Council Act* will allow us to proceed with identifying a strong president and CEO for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women who will partner with the community, with government in the coming years and help us to create change for the women of our province. Frankly, the women of our province need and deserve strong representation. Now is the time.

I ask for support of this Bill 4 to change the legislation so that we can not only fill the volunteer positions on the status of women

advisory committee, but also to attract a stellar candidate as president and CEO.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's once again a pleasure to rise in this hon. House on behalf of the people of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, a fine group of people that I represent, full of integrity and quite pleased to be their Member.

This bill that we have before us today, Mr. Speaker, it's a fairly straightforward bill. Some of the bills that come into the House are quite complicated and require an extensive amount of research and consultations. But this one is really a simple change and, as the minister has explained, it's a change to the process that has been identified by the Independent Appointments committee because right now, simultaneously, they're filling the board of directors as well as the position of president and CEO, and of course the president and CEO is a paid position. The others being volunteers, a different process is required.

Mr. Speaker, like the minister who spoke before me, I'm going to talk a little bit about the Provincial Advisory Council because it is an absolutely incredible entity. I'm not 100 per cent sure, I do stand to be corrected but I think it may have come about in the Peckford era, back in the '80s? Yes.

It was a need identified some 30-plus years ago that women's rights were still behind the eight ball and things still were not changing for women. Mr. Speaker, here we are 30 years later and we still have a long, long, long ways to go for women in the workplace and women's rights overall. The function and the role of the Provincial Advisory Council is very important for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and for all groups and entities really that are forming policies with respect to

women's issues. So they are an absolutely incredible group.

When I served as parliamentary assistant to the Premier, I had the pleasure of working with this group quite extensively, and a very, very impressive group of very strong women. I certainly would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all present and past board members who are really taking great strides to make a difference in women's lives.

Mr. Speaker, here in our House of Assembly, we are still, as women, very small in number. We are trying to make a difference in the lives of women. We're trying to make the House of Assembly a workplace that is suitable for women and that can attract more women to this hon. House. In order to do that, we still need significant change. Hopefully, we will see some ideas come forward, even from the women's Advisory Council pertaining to politics and women's roles in politics.

The more support we can get province wide in terms of trying to recruit women, I think the better off the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be because women bring an additional element to governance. We're new to the role and I often – something that's been on my mind a lot lately, we talk about the way politics used to be versus the way politics is today.

Back in the day, I do believe – I don't think anyone who sits here can actually remember these times, but apparently there was a time, Mr. Speaker, when in the House of Assembly you could drink and you could smoke. I'm kind of glad that isn't the case because I can only imagine how the debates would digress if you were allowed alcohol into this Chamber.

Also, a part of the way politics used to – I wish I could say used to. Also, a part of the way politics operates, there was smoking, there was drinking and there was bullying, Mr. Speaker. That aspect of politics hasn't changed so much. We really don't have a strong enough mechanism in place that we can go out to a woman and confidentially say yes, that's a great workplace for you to go to. You will find you'll enjoy it just as much as your previous employment.

That would be a nice thing if you could actually go out and try and recruit women in that way instead of talking to them about the fact that bullying and intimidation is still pervasive in politics, quite pervasive in politics in this province, in politics in this country, and I would say, Mr. Speaker, throughout all Parliaments.

As women, we're going to continue to stand up and we're going to get stronger and stronger and stronger in our push to have more women in the hon. Houses of Assembly, and of Commons and of the people. We're going to bring more integrity in time with the increased presence, I believe, of women in this hon. House.

We're all familiar with the Weinstein movement. The minister, in her comments, spoke about concerns about bullying. She spoke about the need for safe environments, work environments, especially for girls and women, Mr. Speaker.

We're still looking forward to seeing that happen. Certainly, I for one, and I'm hearing comments of agreement from my colleagues here as well, we're going to stand together and we're going to tackle this issue. We're going to work with all the sitting parliamentarians. We're going to work with all the women support groups, like the women's Advisory Council, and one day – and I hope it's in my lifetime. In fact, I hope it's sooner than that. I hope it's in this sitting that we're going to see some positive change in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

I will take advantage of the opportunity once again – I do have two budget speeches left as well – to echo my comments that I made during the debate that was brought to this hon. House on bullying. To bring forward policy, as the Premier has announced he's going to do for June, is not enough. It's really not good enough. We need legislation. We need legislation that has teeth, that can hold perpetrators responsible, Mr. Speaker.

We need the government of the day to not only give lip service to changing bullying, we need them to set the example of the very highest bar. Only then, will we truly see change that works and change that is in the best interests of men and women and all people of this fine province,

because it will indeed improve the culture of politics and the governance of our fine province.

I'm going to get back to the bill again and how important the women's Advisory Council is. As I said in my opening comments, this bill makes a legislative change to the appointment process for the president and CEO only of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This will bring it in line with current practice and allow the job of president and CEO to be advertised and appointed outside of the call for nominations for the 10 members of the board.

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Mr. Speaker, has 10 volunteer members and one paid position. That's not going to change with this legislation. All of that will remain the same. The current legislation indicates that 11 members are appointed to the Advisory Council and then the Lieutenant-Governor in Council appoints one of those 11 people to the role of president and CEO.

This was identified as being problematic because the president and CEO is a paid position while the remainder of the committee are volunteer members. In the past, two separate recruitment processes have been carried out. There was one for the volunteer members and a separate process for the president and CEO. The implementation of this legislation is going to allow that to continue, Mr. Speaker, as well.

When the Women's Policy Office asked the Independent Appointments Commission to carry out the appointment process, the IAC asked for the legislative changes that are being brought forward today by the minister, as their interpretation of the act didn't allow them to run the two processes. They felt the legislation needed to be changed in order to accommodate that. So this legislation clarifies that 10 members are appointed to the council and that the president is appointed separately. This legislation allows the practice to continue.

So it's not a complicated piece of legislation, as I said in my opening comments. It's important that we pass it because it's very important that the board has a full slate of directors, and has a very, very, very strong president and CEO, Mr. Speaker.

The term length for members are three years and members can apply for reappointment. And the term length for the president and CEO of the paid position is also for three years, and the president can be reappointed as well, Mr. Speaker.

The IAC, or Independent Appointments Commission, is currently recruiting members, and they will post the president position following the passing of this legislation. So here's a good opportunity as well for any women who are out there that think they would like to have a stronger role in policy formation. Keep your eye to the IAC website and there will be a job posting there for the position of president in the not-too-distant future.

The legislation does not include provisions about the staggering of board appointments; however, the staggering does happen by the board itself. They're doing that through their own strategic planning, and there will be some of the members of the current 10 who will reapply for their positions. But there is a wonderful opportunity here for women from all across this province to serve on this board.

It doesn't matter where you live. You can live in Labrador, you can live in The Straits, you can live in Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune - and I'm quite pleased to say I've had two women, two very strong women from my region sit on this board and thoroughly enjoy it.

So to all of you females out there in Newfoundland and Labrador, keep your eye out for this. It's a wonderful opportunity. We, as female parliamentarians here in this hon. House, certainly look forward to working with you as we endeavour the long uphill battle of changing the culture of politics in Newfoundland and Labrador, and actually making it real. We're far from there yet, but we plan to make it real. That the House of Assembly will be a safe place, just as safe for women and girls as it is for men, and one day bullying will be eradicated.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure on this Tuesday after a long weekend to stand and speak for a few minutes to An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act.

I am happy, Mr. Speaker, to stand today as the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, as the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, as a female who grew up in a house of 12 people, we had seven rambunctious boys, as I put it, and then there were three girls. So I understood the different roles there, but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, as the mother of a 21-year-old daughter. Whenever I speak to women's issues, it's always her beautiful face that's before me and reminds me of why we need to do everything we can to support and encourage strong women coming behind us.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women advises government on the interest and concerns of women and girls in our province. They play a critical role in helping advance the status of women in NL. Over the last couple of years, as the provincial rep with the national steering committee for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, I've had the opportunity to work on a number of occasions with the Provincial Advisory Council. One I'm thinking of is the Daughters of the Vote, when we celebrated that and we brought together close to 40 young women. They had a day here in the Legislature and they heard from a number of speakers. I really saw first-hand the value of the work that the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women does.

The Advisory Council comprises of women from throughout the province who bring together diverse experiences and backgrounds to advise on the varied viewpoints of women and girls. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential, it's not just a nice to have but it is essential that we have those diverse experiences and backgrounds.

Just as I was listening to the hon. Member moments before I stood, I was thinking about my travels this weekend. Being in Goose Bay, those women would have different viewpoints, different experiences, than women here in metro. Then I was on the coast in my hometown

in Charlottetown, the background and the experience of those women who live in coastal communities, from the North Coast and the South Coast, would certainly be different. Yesterday, I spent a few hours in St. Anthony and, again, you would have that different viewpoint and experience. So essential, Mr. Speaker, that we have all of those diverse backgrounds at the table to advise on the varied viewpoints of women and girls.

The Advisory Council is set up as an arm's-length organization to ensure the interests of women are well represented. So when we say they're arm's-length, it's essential. We don't control them. We don't direct them. They carry out this important work.

In addition, members and the president will be appointed through the Independent Appointments Commission. I know here in the House everybody would be familiar with the IAC, Bill 1, when we formed government trying to take the politics out of some of the appointments happening, so that is a merit-based appointment process which should serve to strengthen, hopefully, the number of women that come in. I don't have the stats right in front of me, but I do believe the numbers are up of the females applying and finding their way into positions.

Mr. Speaker, in my travels through the years and long before public life in 2013, I have always encouraged women to put themselves forward, to serve on boards and encourage them, talk to them about the opportunities they could have in helping to shape Newfoundland and Labrador. I've told this story here before in the House, but I'll take a moment to tell it again.

One young girl who came to work with me as a secretary many years ago and I guess it was September and elections were up for municipalities around the province. I said: You should put your name forward. She said: What do they do besides collect garbage? I saw her recently at the Health Sciences actually and we always joke about this story. I said: Here's what they do and you're young and you're starting a family and if you want to have some say in your community and things you want to get for your children, that's a great table to sit at.

Long story short, she did put her name forward and that young girl who is now with the Town of Holyrood, she went on to serve on many, many boards and committees and she did very well. She had a lot to offer and she's doing great work today, Mr. Speaker.

That's just one example of how it's incumbent upon all of us as women and as men to reach out and to mentor someone, to encourage them when we see an opportunity to say you'd be a great fit for this. I've been observing you. I can see the skills and talent you have. Sometimes it just takes that little nudge to put your name forward and once they get started, you really don't know where they're going to end up. We all have many examples of strong women throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I often thought, and I sat in your chair for 20 months and sometimes sitting in the chair and late into the night doing the spring sitting and you look around the wall here and I often would think, when I looked at the portraits in this hon. House or if you went for stretch and you took a stroll through the hallways just outside, you can see why we need a Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. You can see why we need to encourage more women to step into leadership roles, why we need to encourage more women to step up into the political sphere.

When we see in these portraits and photos – what we see is the total absence of women. Here since 1949 in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have never had a female Speaker in this province. We know that women are under-represented in leadership positions and politics is no different.

But I am optimistic, we have great women in the House right now in all parties, Mr. Speaker, I would add. We have strong women representing their various districts, and I believe we're on the right track. I am hopeful that, as we go forward, those numbers will continue to climb.

It's important to note that it's not just our province where we have this under-representation. People are grappling with this across the country and trying to encourage more

women. Probably BC – the last time I checked – maybe had the best representation.

Mr. Speaker, without balanced representation, we must be concerned about whether the interests and concerns of women and girls are being represented when decisions are made. One of the reasons women cite for their under-representation in politics is the hectic schedule of the legislature. So we, as government – I was very pleased to be a part of this – to make the legislative calendar public well in advance of the House opening, this is just one way to help encourage women to get involved in politics. It's just one way, Mr. Speaker, but every little bit helps.

Again, my female colleagues will understand this. When you step into public life, it's very hard to plan for family things, it was hard to plan a vacation; it seems you miss the birthday and the anniversaries, and those are the prices that come along the way. So something like a legislative calendar, I can just flick online now and have a look and say the House closes on this date. We always have to be mindful of the events and commitments in our district, the people that we work for, but it helps us a little better if you want to have that little escape with family and find some balance, which is also very important.

As the provincial representative on the national steering committee of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians – I've been in that role since the fall of '14, I believe it was – I take great pride in representing our province at the national level to discuss increasing women's representation in Parliament. Mr. Speaker, since I've been in that role, I've had the opportunity to meet women from right across the country, from the territories, many strong women. I have participated in campaign schools to support women in the territories, put their name forward and run. And sometimes we think – I know my colleague for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune has quite a travel on the weekend and a large district that she serves – it's only here in Newfoundland and Labrador that we have those challenges that we deal with, but I can tell you in the territories when they're going to run for public life they maybe need to take a plane to get into the district. They maybe need to take an interpreter

with them because there are language barriers and things like that.

So it's important for all of us. There's a small percentage of us in this province across the country. It's important for all of us to support each other, Mr. Speaker, if we want to grow that representation.

Entities like the national steering committee of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women are very important for many reasons. I'm just going to mention two or three here, Mr. Speaker. In raising issues of importance to women and girls at decision-making tables; in ensuring a gender lens is applied to all the work we do. And my colleague, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, does a great job in ensuring every paper that we bring, all of us as females, we look through that.

I believe because she takes her role very serious, she looks at that at a more heightened level through that lens of ensuring that the gender lens is applied to all of the work that we do so that we can reflect on how programs and policies affect men and women differently. All the while, our one goal is a shared one, and I believe I can speak for all of the women here in the House, all of the female MHAs, all of the while working to get more women at those tables.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to just say that I totally support the changes proposed, and I would encourage as the debate continues that all of my colleagues here in the House support this amendment today.

Thank you for the opportunity again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'm happy to stand and to speak to Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act. Mr. Speaker, I can remember when the council was first set out, and I remember that the first president was Ann Bell. Ann Bell was a

wonderful feminist activist – she still is – and she was that first president.

Ann Bell came from Corner Brook and she moved to St. John's, but then also travelled all over the province to do the work she was asked to do as president. She was then followed by Wendy Williams, a very good friend of mine. Again, another incredible feminist activist. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stress that it is so important that whoever fills this role is a feminist. This is not just about being a woman; it's about a woman who operates from a feminist ideology, which means she is very much aware that there are systemic barriers and blocks that stop women from having full equality in our communities.

So it's not about feeling nice about women or it's not about thinking wouldn't it be good to do some things, it comes from a real philosophical approach to life that's bedded in the understanding that there are systemic barriers. It's not just happening to individual women or individual girls, but they are systemic and they are systemic issues that must be addressed in order for women and girls to have full equality in our province, in the world.

There are feminists, activists all over the world, all over the globe doing this very important work, and we also know that women's rights are about human rights. That is something that we talk about, and we also know that our rights are never given to us. That they are hard won. As a feminist activist myself, I have worked for years, for years to address the systemic barriers to full equality for women and girls in our province and in our country. As a matter of fact globally as well, as a documentary filmmaker, I produced a number of films that addressed systemic barriers to women and girls.

One of the films I did was called *The Vienna Tribunal* which was a film about the violation of women's human rights all over the world. This took place in Vienna where there was a UN panel that listened to testimony from women and girls from around the world.

When I asked to do this, I was invited by an incredible international women's rights group who first starting coining and using the phrase: women's rights are human rights. I thought I'm

not so sure that this is the best material from which to do a film. When you have a panel of judges from all over the world, a tribunal, United Nations tribunal listening to testimony from women and girls from all over the world, I thought no, that might not be the best material for a film. Mr. Speaker, but I agreed to do this and I was so moved by the power of the voices of the women and the girls who testified.

They were all ages and they talked about issues all over the world. There were Korean comfort women who were used during the Second World War by Japanese soldiers, women in their 80s who talked about that experience. There were women who were lesbians living in countries where it was illegal to be so, who had been arrested, who had been imprisoned. There were women talking about the inability to have access to safe therapeutic abortions. It was so powerful just the simple act.

When I made that film, Mr. Speaker, what I did was I cleared away all the noise; I cleared away all the distractions. It was basically hearing different women from different parts of the world simply stand and give their testimony. It wasn't about just recounting the horrendous human rights abuses, it was also about resilience, strength and the commitment so many of these women – it took courage to stand and to not only tell their story, but demand change.

As a matter of fact, there were a few women who took part in this tribunal who couldn't return to their country after testifying because it wasn't safe for them. Many of those issues have changed since that time, Mr. Speaker. Not because our rights were given to us, but because we worked so hard for them. We still have many systemic barriers ahead of us.

That's why it's so important that our Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is not about government's voice to the women and girls of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it's about the voice of the women and girls of Newfoundland and Labrador to government that this Provincial Advisory Council's role as an independent statutory arm's-length organization must represent the women and girls of this province to government for the sole purpose of pushing for change and equality. That is the role

of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

After Wendy Williams – and Wendy Williams was someone who helped start Planned Parenthood here in the province, who was doing very important work. Wendy also lobbied for fully funded abortion services here in the province for the women of Newfoundland and Labrador. Followed by her was Joyce Hancock, another incredible feminist activist who pushed and pushed and pushed for the rights to improve the status of women and girls in this province.

Joyce was from Stephenville, Wendy Williams was from St. John's and then there was Leslie MacLeod. Leslie MacLeod also was the executive director of the St. John's Status of Women Council. It was during her term that Marguerite's Place was put in place, another fantastic feminist activist. Leslie MacLeod continues to do incredible work now as a feminist activist in conjunction with Thrive, with Blue Door, with the Multicultural Women's Organization.

These are women who are presidents, who did effective feminist activism in their role and continue to do so, because they know how important it is and because they are feminists. It's not about just being a professional as was stated earlier in the House. It's about having that understanding of these systemic issues.

Then our current, soon-to-retire president, Linda Ross, who came from a background of years with Oxfam. Looking at the issue of the status of women issues globally, and how global issues affect women and how also women in different parts of the world can work together to ensure we have more equality all over the globe for women and girls.

I would like to thank all these feminist activists, all of them for the incredible work they have done. None of it goes unnoticed. We know the advances that have been made by women, by the women's community here in the province.

Also, when speaking about the Provincial Advisory Council, it's not just about the presidents. It's also about the board of directors. The board of directors as well, each and every single appointment to that board must be a

woman who has a feminist analysis, who has an awareness of systemic issues and who knows that her role is to bring the concerns of the women and girls in her region of the province to the table of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Again, their role is to lobby government, to advocate on behalf of the women and the children of this province. It's not about government influencing them. It's about having that very important role of pushing and prodding and advocating and also celebrating and commending government when government does do the right thing, when government does do policy or legislation that improves the lives of women and girls in this province, that addresses systemic barriers. That is the role of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, that is role of the board and that is the role of the president.

I'd also like, at this point, to also commend the women activists around the province and the young girls who are also involved in feminist activism around the province.

I don't know if people have looked into the kind of work that the Girls Guides are doing recently in Canada. They are promoting feminist activism. It's wonderful. They're looking at issues of violence against women. They're looking at issues of pay equity. They're looking at issues that address systemic barriers to women and girls participating fully and equally in our society. So I would like to commend all those activists and the feminist activists in the student movement. I would like to commend all of them for the incredible work they are doing.

It is the responsibility of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women to really be in touch with these activists all over the province. To be their voice at the table where decisions are being made. That is the role of the Provincial Advisory Council and all those who are associated with it.

I'd also like to thank the staff at the Provincial Advisory Council who do research, who do papers to advise government on where things should be, but it's so important that there be an openness and a two-way street with the Provincial Advisory Council and with civil

society to ensure that we are all working together to improve the quality of lives for women and girls. It is so important, Mr. Speaker.

It can't happen, we can't have people just involved in the administration of the office of the Provincial Advisory Council, that this is not only an arm's-length independent, statutory organization, but it's embedded in our communities. It needs to be embedded in our communities right across the province, right around the province and this is the work that the Provincial Advisory Council has been doing.

That also leads me to the issue of: How do we comprise the board? We need to make sure that there are women, and also we have to look at the issue of transwomen and people who are on the non-binary system. We have to make sure that all female-identified women are represented on the board of the provincial advisory committee and that their needs are also represented through the voice of the provincial advisory committee.

We have geographic considerations as well to consider and we have diversity to consider: immigrant women, racialized women, women with physical disabilities, lesbians. It's so important again that our board for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women really reflects the diversity and the reality of the lives of women and girls in our province. Wouldn't it be great to have a really young woman on this board as well?

One of the things we haven't done so well lately in the women's movement is we haven't paid enough attention, I believe, to the issue of mentoring and how important that would be to be able to mentor young women. I like to do that myself as a politician. When we look around, 25 per cent of our Members are women. It's not good. Here we are in 2018 and only 25 per cent of the women here at the tables in our province where decisions are made, only 25 per cent are women.

When we look at how long it takes us to get more representation, who knows, maybe it will be the year 3000 before we gain equality and parity here in the House of Assembly. It's hard to say, but it's taken us a long time to get to this

point. Sometimes we get a little further ahead and sometimes we lose some ground.

I would also like to think that what is really important, again we are looking for feminists to be on this board. We are looking for a feminist to be the president. I believe it's really important to have at least two positions on the board of directors for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women that are chosen from all of the Women Centres, the Aboriginal Women's Network and the Multicultural Women's Organization. They should be able to choose members themselves that represent them and that are their voice here on this board because they are the front-line workers and they know the needs.

It is imperative that we have an indigenous woman on this board. It's imperative that we have an immigrant woman on this board. It's imperative that we have a specific representation of a woman from the Women's Centres and the Status of Women Councils from across the province. They are doing the front-line work and they need to be at that table.

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is women's and girl's voice to government, advising government, advocating on behalf of women and girls and pushing government. We cannot let up because we know that often we gain ground and then we can lose ground. Those of us who have been at this for a long time – and, Mr. Speaker, I've been at this a long time and a lot of the women who I've mentioned here today have been at it a long time – we know that our rights are not given to us, they are hard won.

I just want to briefly – I only have a few minutes left – identify some of the issues that I think are really pressing in our province. The issue of poverty among senior women in Newfoundland and Labrador is shameful. We have the highest percentage of senior women in receipt of OAS and GIS who live on about \$13,000 a year.

Out of that they have to pay rent, their over-the-counter medication, their dental costs, their transportation, their food, their phone, their TV and birthday card for their granddaughter. Out of \$13,000 year for single senior women on OAS and GIS, they are living far below the poverty

line. It is shameful. When we just came out of years of prosperity, to think that our senior women in Newfoundland and Labrador are living in poverty and going to food banks, there is no excuse for this.

I'm also concerned about the high levels of gender-based violence against women and girls in our province. We need a task force on this issue. The women on the front lines, every single Women's Centre and Status of Women Council has pushed for this. The families of women who have been murdered or who have been victims of gender-based violence are pushing for this. There's no longer any good reason not to push forward on this.

The issue of pay equity – I presented a private Member's motion last year asking government to start the work for pay equity. I would have assumed, here we are in 2018, that we already would have arrived at that. Where is our all-party committee on pay equity? That was at least a very concrete step that government could do was to call an all-party committee on pay equity to get things rolling. We keep asking what's happening; there's no response. I have no reason to believe that anything concrete is happening. If I am wrong, I'd like to be proven wrong and I will celebrate that. But, Mr. Speaker, we are no further ahead, a year later, on pay equity than when my private Member's motion was passed unanimously in this House.

There are a number of other issues. There was a women's theatre festival that received no funding this year. We have women students, female students in female traditional faculties who don't get paid for their work in their student placements. That is not equity.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much work that we have to do and I believe that the women of Newfoundland and Labrador are ready to do that work –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Again, I'd like to thank all those on the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, staff, board members and Linda Ross, and I look forward to working with them in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

It's always an honour and a privilege to stand here in our spots and represent the districts of course which we represent. In this case, I represent the strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and I'm happy to say there are a lot of strong women, strong, independent volunteers, women who take initiative that come from Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, and that's certainly something I'm very proud of.

Just for our viewers at home, Mr. Speaker, just to go over that this bill, Bill 4, which we're speaking to, An Act To Amend The Status of Women Advisory Council Act, this would amend the *Status of Women Advisory Council Act* to remove the requirement that the president of the Advisory Council be appointed from the persons appointed as members of the council – just for our viewers at home.

As I mentioned, it always is an honour to stand here. For nearly 40 years, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women has been an advisor to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and to the government as a whole. It has been the voice for women and girls in our communities on issues that are of importance such as gender-based violence, bullying and harassment, and gender equality.

At this time, I'd like to talk about my own personal dealings with the president Linda Ross who was very helpful. Prior to becoming an MHA, I was a journalist and I have covered many stories pertaining to violence against women, crimes and even these topics in general. I must say Linda has always been a strong, adamant voice in this role and I would like to commend her and all she stands for.

Over the past number of months issues of violence against women, harassment and, indeed, all forms of bullying have increasingly been brought into the light. More and more, incidents being experienced by women are being openly discussed, and of course we see this everywhere, Mr. Speaker. Especially in a recent

move in Hollywood even, the MeToo campaign. We're seeing people bring these issues forward. People in the workplace, if their colleagues are experiencing this, they're witnesses. They're coming forward, and it's certainly something we need to see. As a society, we are at a tipping point.

Both the Time's Up and the #MeToo campaigns have brought these issues to the forefront. Communities around the world are moving to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence, including harassment. We're in the year 2018 and it's certainly a time. Times have changed. Times have modernized and there's simply no room for harassment or bullying of any kind to women, to girls, to children, to men, to people, to human beings alike. There's simply no room for that anywhere. Whether it be a workplace, whether it be somewhere where we play, somewhere where we go for recreational value, it simply should not be tolerated and it won't be tolerated.

We all have a story of harassment or violence, whether it's our own or that of a family member, a friend or colleague. There's simply no escaping the effect it has on women in every walk of life. The stories are difficult and moving and have a profound impact on all of us.

At this time, I would like to reflect on a story back in my journalism career. I covered the story of Ann Marie Shirran. It was something that I was assigned to the story all summer. It was months and months ongoing. This young woman was reported missing, initially. Of course, reporters of all media outlets here locally, we would all gather every other day for a scrum with the local RNC and the RCMP, and even the Rover Search and Rescue units. It's something that I'll never forget. The trauma, it's simply scary.

That woman was reported missing by her then-common-law husband. It had gone on for months, all summer. All through of the local region here. They were actually scanning the woods in Blackhead toward Cape Spear. You saw the search and rescue teams out scanning and looking and looking, and time had gone by. There were some clues and leads that would come in, of course, but nothing solid until it was the end of that summer, just after the camping

season. I believe it was the Labour Day weekend, and human remains were discovered in a gravel pit in Cappahayden. It turned out to be this woman, this woman's remains.

That's before the courts, of course. It was found that it was her then-common-law husband who was charged, facing murder charges. I'll never forget. That young woman had a little baby boy, an infant baby boy. A thought that remains with me is that little boy, who's now a young man today, will grow up not knowing his mother, only hearing the horrific stories of the event of what had happened. This is something that we just simply cannot tolerate anymore, Mr. Speaker. It's sad, it's heartbreaking. It rips apart families, relationships of all kinds.

Another story I remember – and this was in my early journalism days. One of the very first stories I was assigned to was at the Supreme Court here in St. John's. It was a murder charge. Again, it was a domestic disturbance. It was in the case where a woman had been murdered by – the accused was her boyfriend at the time. Too often we hear of these stories.

Look no further than Loretta Saunders, that young woman was an advocate standing up for women's rights and violence against Aboriginal women and girls. Ironically she, herself, was a victim of the very cause that she was standing up advocating to eradicate. These stories, we can all relate if it's a family member, if it's a friend, if it's our own personal experience.

I shared some experiences one day here in the House recently, Mr. Speaker, when my colleague had brought forth a private Member's resolution to eradicate just that and to create, to expand and modernize harassment policy in the workplace, in all kinds of workplaces. We hear tell of it with other journalists.

A young journalist, Heather Gillis, came forward and made national headlines for the harassment she experienced. It wasn't a traditional workplace. Being a journalist, being a reporter you're out and about, you're everywhere. This happened to be on the side of the road speaking with the mayor of St. John's. As we know, there were some remarks that were yelled out. It certainly is a form of harassment.

Also, Chris O'Neill-Yates, a reporter from CBC, also experienced and had come forward about this. So people are talking. People are standing up for their rights because they deserve nothing less. Anything that we can do to enhance women and the cause for the Advisory Council, for women all around, we have to do that. An obligation is on all of us here.

We look here in the House of Assembly, 10 elected Members of the 40 are women. That's a pitiful number. We need to do more. We need to do more to reach out for women who want to become involved in politics, who want to become involved in leadership roles, in non-traditional roles and industry. We have to do more. I think the onus is on us here in the House of Assembly as MHAs and citizens alike to do what we can. Let's do that. Let's promote that.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we need to continue to talk about what's happening and we need to continue to work together to find solutions. Government is currently reviewing other legislation and policies including the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Municipalities Act* to see how these might be improved to better serve those who have experienced violence and harassment. By examining current policies, programs and legislation we are able to work and to address root causes. Our government works in collaboration with community stakeholders to find long-term solutions to eradicate violence.

I attended a committee that was recently formed, the Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls. At that first meeting, all my colleagues in the House, pretty much here, our female colleagues, attended that meeting. Let me tell you, it was a full house mainly consisting of females, of women, but there were some men there as well and to hear those stories. There were Aboriginal women, women from all kinds of different backgrounds, some were victim survivors, we're happy to say, and to hear some of those stories. It's very sad, but at the same time empowering. It just goes to show that women are not sitting down and taking this any longer and they're not going to.

All of these organizations provide valuable services to survivors of violence in our

communities. Our government of course is proud, and so we should be, to partner with these organization. As a Member of this government, it's certainly something I'm committed to doing.

For all the work that is currently being done in the area of violence and harassment prevention, of course, more remains. We can always do more. As a Member of this government, I certainly am committed to seeing the government strengthen the capacity to departments and agencies to understand and apply gender-based analysis to policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets in order to ensure equitable outcomes for women in the province.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to revert to *The Way Forward* plan which was just released today. I will read this action 3.3.6, helping women advance in leadership roles. Women are greatly underrepresented in all types of leadership roles including managerial positions, in politics and on boards. The province loses opportunity for valuable insight and expertise when women do not meaningfully participate or are excluded from leadership opportunities.

In 2018-19, to address this important issue, our government will implement a government community leadership initiative that seeks to increase the number of women in leadership roles, host a conference on the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador that facilitates knowledge sharing and mentorship.

So there is certainly much work to be done, Mr. Speaker. To echo my colleagues in the House today, I certainly support this amendment to this bill. I look forward to all the co-operation unanimously here in the House because, again, the more we can do to help women, to help each other, we sure are obligated to do that.

As Members here in the House of Assembly, we are role models, to a degree. People are watching us, people are looking at us to do the right thing, to be trailblazers, to be leaders and to certainly improve in all areas where we can.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will take my seat and I look forward to the co-operation of all the House on this bill.

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 only going to take a couple of moments to speak to Bill 4. I guess I just want to bring it around to really what the bill is about. It's a pretty simple amendment. I do appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the latitude that has been given to all Members on all sides of the House to really go beyond the scope of what the bill is about and to talk more generally about the importance of us all supporting women and supporting all those initiatives.

Certainly, as a father myself, I have two daughters and I want what is best for them, and why wouldn't I. That means equal opportunity to employment, equal pay, to be treated fairly, to be treated with respect and not to be subject to any types of violence, harassment or anything else.

I think that's a goal that we would all share in this House of Assembly. While it really is not what this bill is about, per se, I think it's important for us all to acknowledge that, and I certainly appreciate the comments made this afternoon by colleagues on all sides of the House. They can speak as women and perhaps with more in-depth knowledge of the issues and so on and perhaps lived experience than I can as a man, but that doesn't mean that I can't support them and I certainly do in that.

As it relates to the bill itself, really, all that's happening in this bill or mainly what's happening in this bill is we're basically saying that currently on the status of women Advisory Council, they would have 11 members and they would select the paid chair of the board, if you will, would be elected or selected, if you will, from that volunteer committee. What we're saying is that we would still maintain the Advisory Council. They would still continue to do all the great work they do. It would be a volunteer board. What this amendment is saying is that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council,

which is essentially the Cabinet, would select the paid chair.

Now, they would do that through the Independent Appointments Commission. My understanding, anybody, that could include, by the way – if there's somebody who's on the Advisory Council now as a volunteer, there's nothing to stop that person from applying. If a position came up to be chair, they could certainly apply, just like anybody else, for that position.

Basically it will be open to everybody in the public to apply for the position. Then the Independent Appointments Commission would select the three names of the people who they feel are the most qualified to fill that position as a permanent paid position. Then, of course, it would be up to the Cabinet or the minister to select one of those three names.

That's really what's happening here. I have no issue with what's being done here. At the very least it ensures, through the IAC, that whoever gets that position certainly would have to meet the qualifications and have all the skill sets to do the job. It takes away that sort of subjectivity that could happen just selecting amongst the group that are already there.

With that in mind, I will be supporting this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's all I'll say.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women speaks now, she will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to speak to this again. I think I have the support of the entire House on making this minor amendment to the *Status of Women Advisory Council Act* to remove the requirement the president of the Advisory Council be appointed from the persons appointed as members of the council.

I remind those that are listening in the debate the members of the council are volunteers. The president and CEO is a paid position, a professional position, basically managing and arranging the affairs of the office of the provincial Status of Women.

I want to say that the purpose of the act really sets out the purpose and function of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Detailed in the act are the duties of the Provincial Advisory Council, the process of appointment for members and other relevant information about the function and accountability of council. This small change would then really help to facilitate the appointment of the new president and CEO of the Advisory Council through the Independent Appointments Commission.

It speaks to the Member opposite's point a moment ago when he talked about having this independence of the Appointments Commission to evaluate those who have the skill sets to both sit on the council themselves, but also have the professionalism and skill sets required as president and CEO.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is a very straightforward change. I will thank all those again who volunteer on the provincial status of women Advisory Council. The Member or St. John's Centre did speak of some of the past leaders of the provincial status of women Advisory Council and we certainly appreciate them for their efforts.

We are working on their legacy. We continue to advance a lot of the efforts that they brought forward in their time as presidents and now with the current president Linda Ross who is set to move from the position this year, we thank her for her efforts. We will stand on her shoulders as we look to continue to implement more changes as we move forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the questions that we may have in Committee and I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 4 be now read a second time.

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.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act. (Bill 4)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a second time.

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House? Now?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 4)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 4.

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.'

This 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 (Reid): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act, Bill 4.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act." (Bill 4)

CLERK: Clause 1.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just a couple of questions here I'll direct to the minister.

Can you provide a status update on the ongoing IAC process to recruit the committee members and what stage we're at right now, please?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, we have made a request to the Independent Appointments Commission. They have been recruiting for the position, the positions that are available on the provincial Status of Women. I understand the Independent Appointments Commission have gone through some of those recommendations and have forwarded to me, as minister, a list of potential. We are considering those and we'll advise in the near future as to how we proceed.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: I should have asked it all together and I'll put the next two together.

How many are presently vacant, and can you also let me know on the status when you think the time frame for the appointment of the new CEO will be put in play?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: I'll take the latter first and say that once we are finished with this process here in the House of Assembly and the bill has enacted the change, of course – we had gone to the Independent Appointments Commission seeking to begin the process and were advised of the barriers in the legislation so that's why the legislation is before the House today. As soon as the legislation is through the House process and those changes are made – assuming that I have the support of the House – we'll begin the recruitment process for the new president and CEO.

We encourage all those with the skills and the interest to apply for that position. We're hopeful to have somebody within the next number of months; it would depend on how quickly we can get the recruitment process underway. And, of course, the Independent Appointments Commission is very busy recruiting for a number of boards that have vacancies.

On the vacancies, I believe there are six vacancies available on that board. I believe it is six. I can check and confirm that, but I believe there are six vacancies coming up. There is a changeover in that board process, which will be good coming into a new president and CEO, maintaining that kind of energy and involvement of the provincial status of women committee.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to ask the minister: Is there any intention in regulations or policy to ensure that diversity is covered in the appointments of the board members?

CHAIR: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you.

I'm just going to update my comment from previous. All positions will be expired by August, I've just been informed. I will let you know that we are recruiting really for a full board.

To the Member's point, we do ask the Independent Appointments Commission to consider all community in that process. We do, however, ask for women. We do have an exemption under the *Human Rights Act* to have all women appointed because otherwise it would be women and men.

We ask for skill sets, not specifically representatives of the community, but skill sets that would be important, I think, to the process. We would encourage people who have diverse interests in our community to make their application through the independent appointments process so that we can have as many names possible in that process.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Chair, I would think that because of the work of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the representative voice that they are for the women and girls in our province, there would be a real intention and a stated intention to really represent the diversity of the province.

When we look specifically at the issue of indigenous women, I would think that it would be absolutely imperative to ensure there was an indigenous woman, First Peoples woman, represented on the council. I would also think because of the growing population of immigrant women and racialized women that there would be a specific intention to make sure there were those positions covered.

The other issue for me – again because of the front-line work being done by the individual Women's Centres and Status of Women Councils – I would ask the minister if she would

consider ensuring there would be at least one representative. We know there is a provincial association of individual Status of Women Councils, PANSOW, Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women. If there would be an openness to ensure there would be at least one of those positions dedicated to someone chosen by PANSOW to be their representative on the board.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is part of the IAC process to look for diversity. That is part of the Independent Appointments Commission's process, so diversity is considered when they are looking at appointments. I would ask as many people to put their names forward as possible, continue to do that.

With regard to having a particular chosen representative on the board of directors, that hasn't been considered. It might be something the board wishes to consider in the process going forward. I would suggest to the Member opposite and to members of PANSOW and to members of the status of women's organization that they put as many people forward as they possibly can through the process. It is an independent appointments process. We would certainly welcome their involvement in that process because we want to get the best board members possible, and that would be helpful to have as many people as possible in that.

So the diversity question is answered through the IAC, and no one specifically for PANSOW, but we certainly welcome their applications as members.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for her response, and we know that we do not have any diversity that's embedded within our IAC. Also, we don't even have gender. When we just take a look around this House, we know that just hoping that that intention would be followed through doesn't necessarily result in appointments that do reflect

diversity. But I certainly take it – I accept that she says that because this is an independent board that perhaps the board itself will be coming up with recommendations on how to address that.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: I will assure the Member opposite that, in our deliberations, we went out to a number of community groups, including a lot of the indigenous leadership and indigenous groups, to make sure that they understood the process and to encourage them to submit applications.

I know that some members of other status of women's organizations, we went to all of them. We went out to a vast community, encouraging applications so that we could have as many people as possible put their names forward to the Independent Appointments Commission and, hopefully, we'll have a great cross-section brought forward as volunteers for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2, 3 and 4.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2, 3 and 4 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Status Of Women Advisory Council Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 4.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the bill as carried.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 4 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 4 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the budget.

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

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

I'm very happy to rise today and get my opportunity to speak to *Budget 2018*. Like many of my colleagues, last week was Volunteer Week and I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to say a very big thank you to the valuable opportunities that volunteers provide to our communities and the immeasurable amount they give to each and every community across our province.

There are some staggering events that happened over the last week with respect to Volunteer Week. There were 66 volunteer appreciation events that happened right across our province.

From Southern Labrador to Hopedale, to the Towns of Norris Point to Woody Point, from Gillams to Cow Head, from the Gander Boys and Girls Club to the Royal Canadian Legion in Botwood, from the Marystown Lions Golden Age 50+ Club to the Town of Port Blandford and from the Eating Disorder Foundation, a volunteer appreciation event, to the Allied Youth luncheon. Those are just to name a few of the some-66 volunteer appreciation events that the provincial Volunteer Week Committee was able to participate in and/or help fund some of those activities.

It's a perfect opportunity. Coming from a volunteer background and a volunteer organization background, I think it's very important that we don't only use Volunteer Week to thank volunteers, but we use every day of the year to thank those many, many volunteers that give so much and so freely of their time and talents.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight some of the major statistics of volunteers within the province: 46.4 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians aged 15 years and older volunteer, while the national average is only 43.6 per cent. So we're doing better than the national average. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians volunteer approximately 30.2 million volunteer hours or an average of 151 hours of unpaid time each and every year; 66.7 per cent of Newfoundland and Labrador's youth between the ages of 15 and 24.

That's 66.7 per cent of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 volunteer while the national average is only 53.2 per cent. Again, a significant increase above what the national average is.

Canadians volunteer approximately two billion hours as of 2013, which is equivalent to about one million full-time jobs. So you can imagine what would happen to the communities that these people volunteer in if it wasn't for them giving so freely of their time and talent, Mr. Speaker.

Virginia Waters - Pleasantville has opportunities to volunteer at schools, breakfast programs, sports teams, Big Brothers Big Sisters; also with many organizations like Food First NL, Vera Perlin, ReStore, which is a Habitat for Humanity, Single Parent Association, SWAP, CNIB, just to name a few.

One that I'd like to delve into a little bit more would be the great work that CHANNAL is doing in our district. They're always looking for volunteers to assist them in tackling mental health issues in St. John's and across our province. They run programs such as the Warm Line which is a peer support pre-crisis line where people volunteer to simply be on the phone with people to just be a friendly voice for them to hear or to listen to them. Their program centres around mental health and wellness, such as assisting women who have been assaulted into a hospital or a police station if that needs to happen. Making this trip that is incredibly difficult a little bit more manageable by allowing them to go with them.

St. John's, and especially Virginia Waters, is bursting at the seams with opportunities to help out and people getting involved from schools to animal shelters, to helping end homelessness or address homelessness. There is always somewhere to lend a hand.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, last week I think, talked about we need to spend more time on reducing the budget and why we waited so long to do it. I have to say to the Member from Mount Pearl – Southlands, it's because we weren't the government when this problem started. If we were, we would have started that a little quicker than we did. From

that perspective, I think I agree with my colleague from the opposite side but we weren't the ones able to make those decisions and it's unfortunate we weren't.

I really believe *Budget 2018* is strategic in how we are going to deal with the province's economic, social and fiscal challenges. It is being done in a way that is methodical, fair and responsible.

Our government's fiscal plan is one of balance. We are focused on reducing spending within government and maintaining spending on services and programs outside of government.

Wherever possible, we are looking to spend less on us and more on the citizens. In just a couple of years, we have come a long way and I can say, without a doubt, that we are making the province a better place for our children and their children's children. But we need to maintain our focus on doing more with less, finding ways to do things better and use technology where we can. We know that can work.

We know that our fiscal problems did not arise overnight and we know we can't take severe actions like massive job reductions or cuts to services that would have far-reaching impacts on an already vulnerable economy. We also know that we face challenges delivering services to a dispersed and aging population. But, Mr. Speaker, our role as government is to ensure that all residents in our province have access to a comparable level of services to other jurisdictions across this country.

In a department like Service NL, we see the impacts of service delivery first-hand. I've said many times in the House that there's no doubt that everyone in this House has been touched by our department in some way, whether it's birth certificates, marriage certificates, driver's licence or an inspection of some type, Service NL has a role to play. The department is responsible for the majority of licensing, inspections, public record keeping, the regulatory functions within government and is a primary access point for people who need these services.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017-2018, Service NL generated revenue of over \$139 million through

functions as issue of fees, registry of deeds and especially transactions at the Motor Vehicle Registration Division. This truly speaks to the level of interaction that the public has with Service NL.

Over the last few years, we've made significant improvements to ensure that our services are available online so that no matter where you live in our beautiful province, you can access those services. This is a valuable resource for our rural areas. Right now, you can search for a deed of a company online, you can renew your vehicle registration online, you book an appointment to renew your driver's licence online or you can check to see who is lobbying government and for whom.

In *Budget 2018* we'll be continuing the improvements of online services and the plan to implement more opportunities to provide improved services to the people of our province. Of Service NL's \$34.893 million budgeted in 2018-19, almost 78 per cent is for salaries. It's a staggering number, but this is reflective of the fact that our main resource is our human resources dedicated to service delivery, which makes sense considering that we're a service-oriented department.

A significant portion of our budget is spent directly in regions outside the St. John's, Mount Pearl, metropolitan area including Motor Registration Division, Government Service Centres, Vital Statistics, Residential Tenancies and the Occupational Health and Safety services.

Mr. Speaker, the safety of our residents is of utmost importance to our government. Over the past year, we have made many amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to improve safety on our roadways. We have addressed everything from impaired driving to enhanced fines to the creation of new offences. We also purchased six portable weigh scales to replace existing equipment, which supports the very important work of our highway enforcement staff.

Mr. Speaker, another area of utmost importance is public health and safety. In co-operation with the Department of Health and Community Services, Service NL is responsible for environmental health programs. We have 37 environmental health officers who are dedicated

to this effort, along with six environmental technicians who sample water supplies and two dedicated specialized managers for program and policies.

Last year alone, approximately 20,000 water samples were taken from municipal water supplies. There were more than 6,000 food premise inspections; 2,000 on-site septic system inspections; and over 800 inspections of tobacco retailers, just to name a few of the services that Service NL undertakes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight a few more areas of interest for Service NL that is delved into the protection of our people in our province. As you're aware, Newfoundland and Labrador has some of the highest automobile insurance rates in the Atlantic Canada. These rates, which have steadily increased over the past 13 years since the last review of the province's insurance industry – last July, our government put forward terms of reference to the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities to conduct public consultations, as well as two independent closed-claim studies. One, to look at the rising insurance claim costs and, the second, specifically focused on claims related to taxi operators. The goal of this review is to identify opportunities to lower rates that will benefit consumers and help bring stability into the industry.

On April 9, our government launched the portion of our consultation process which will complement the review that's currently underway by the PUB. In addition, Service NL is currently conducting its own consultations, including exploring issues outside the scope of the PUB's mandate such as rate setting itself.

Both the Public Utilities Board and the provincial government's review processes include opportunities for the public to share ideas about measures to improve highway safety and automobile accident prevention in Newfoundland and Labrador. Feedback from these reviews will help inform potential future changes to the *Automobile Insurance Act* and the *Insurance Companies Act* in the fall of 2018.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we recently amended the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* to allow for an increase in the

income replacement rate for injured workers in our province from 80 per cent to 85 per cent. The income replacement rate is the percentage of the worker's pre-injury net income which is covered by the workers' compensation system. As of April 1, 2018, the rate is calculated at 85 per cent of the individual's net after-tax earnings.

Within the wage loss benefit calculation, the worker's gross before-tax income is capped at the maximum compensable assessable earnings, which is \$64,375 for 2018 which is, again, an increase over last year. At present, this threshold in Newfoundland and Labrador is the highest in Atlantic Canada.

The higher income replacement rate will help improve benefits for injured workers and dependent spouses without increasing the average assessment rate charged to employers. So it's a win-win. With the legislative amendment, our province has achieved parity with other Atlantic provinces in calculating wage loss benefits at 85 per cent of the net income.

The workers' compensation system in our province is fully funded and its financial position has improved. It can now sustain the benefits increase for injured workers without increasing the average base assessment rate paid by its employers. In fact, the average assessment rate for employers has been lowered this year from \$1.90 per \$100 payroll in 2018 and reduced 31 per cent over 2013 numbers.

This is very positive as we've been able to increase the benefit for injured workers and dependants and reducing the rate for the employers as well. This is due to positive trends not only in the workplace safety across our province, and lost-time incident rates are at an all-time low of 1.5 per 100 workers, there have also been fewer claims. This, in turn, has led to lower employer assessment rates. Together with employers, workers, industry safety organizations, labour advocates, we are working towards building an even stronger culture for safety in our province.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we've made a commitment to introduce legislative amendments concerning the *Real Estate Trading*

Act in this province. Last year, our provincial government engaged with the real estate industry to collect feedback on issues that the industry have here in our province.

Government last engaged with the industry to review the *Real Estate Trading Act* in 2012. Our government listened to the calls from the real estate industry to modernize this legislation. This legislation has not been substantially amended since it was introduced in 1970. Some of the people in this House weren't even born when that legislation was introduced in 1970.

The real estate industry expressed desire to work collaboratively with the provincial government to ensure the real estate act is meeting the needs of those involved in the business, as well as the needs of the buyers. A public consultation process was launched last December and we had a considerable amount of feedback that was received. The consultation process will build upon the feedback in 2012 and further explore issues of primary importance to the industry, such as conflict of interest and whether a salesperson should be considered employees or independent contractors.

The feedback that we received from this consultation is now under consideration and will inform potential changes to the *Real Estate Trading Act*. These items that I've discussed certainly speak to the vital services which continue to support and be supported in *Budget 2018*, and will allow us to provide better services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we're always also continuously looking for innovative ways to improve our delivery of these services and that's why *Budget 2018* will support the commitment of innovative work arrangements by introducing mobile inspection devices for our field inspectors. This will certainly improve the ability to complete inspection reports in a timelier manner, which will in turn help increase the number of inspections carried out.

This was a short overview of some of the important services that Service NL delivers each and every day to our province. I'm going to take the last couple of minutes just to delve into a couple of other little items, but I'm proud to

speak on the budget and protecting the valuable programs and services and hopefully getting better outcomes out of our investment and creating an environment which supports economic development and job creation.

We're on target to return to surplus by 2023. As a result of these actions we have taken over the last two years and the decisions made in *Budget 2018*, we look forward to our continued service to the people of the province over the next year, and service which our budget in 2018 will allow us to provide.

We saw many great additions come from *Budget 2018*, and I, all along with many of my colleagues – and I won't have much time to delve into this, but with many of my other colleagues in the House we had the pleasure of sitting on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I really can't speak for my colleagues in the House, but I can say it was a life-changing experience for me.

We travelled around the province, held numerous public consultations with individuals with lived experience, family members, young people, community leaders, educators, specialists, health care professionals, volunteers, among many, many others. These consultations were difficult but needed to occur. Because of the individuals' openness and willingness to share their very difficult stories, our committee and our government was able to put forward recommendations that will change the face of mental health and addictions in our province.

I would be doing a great disservice to the people of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville if I didn't talk about the great additions to our mental health and addictions services. By placing more resources in the community, we are allowing people to have easier access to supports and treatments, which everyone agrees is a great step in the right direction.

Mental health and addictions has been a main focus for our government, and I'm proud that we continue to deliver and make mental and addictions more accessible to the people of our province. We have tackled the challenge head-on, which is what everyone dealing with mental health and addictions wants us to do. Much is

left to be done, but we are committed to make meaningful change in our communities.

I got 30 seconds or so left, but I but in addition to putting mental health and addictions resources in place, I would remiss if I didn't say what a great opportunity we've put forward by placing the replacement for the Waterford at the Health Sciences Complex.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: Where we can now dispel the stigma associated with mental health and addictions and try to treat it on the same playing field as physical health. Physical and mental health should be one in the same and it can be treated in the same complex and I'm very proud that that's going to take place in the City of St. John's. I'm very pleased for that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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.

It's indeed an honour to get up and speak to *Budget 2018*. No doubt, my hon. colleague over there talked about a number of the things that are positive, that's outlined in the budget and it's left to interpretation. I'm not one here to bash this at all because I do realize that the government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – has to make some decisions and there are some challenges there.

As I said from the beginning when we started nearly three years ago, three budgets ago with government, if government does something that I think is in the best interest of the people here, I'll acknowledge it. If they do something that I think is not in the best interest or challenge it or

can't be justified, then we have no problems challenging it. That's what we've done in this House for the last three budgets that we've debated and we'll continue to do this over the next month or so until this budget is completed and we've opened it up for interpretation but, particularly, hopefully for clarification for the general public here on what's happened.

Again, I'll reiterate that there are challenges in Newfoundland and Labrador. We understand that and we accept that. There are still some alarming issues around the indicators from an economic point of view but, again, and I think we've all agreed when we get into bantering back and forth, we have to keep the spirit of the intent here that Newfoundland and Labrador is still a very vibrant province here. We're not going anywhere. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador won't allow that. The industries here won't allow it. The creativity that we have here won't allow that, so we're in for the long haul and we will survive, there's no doubt about it.

As we go through that process, how do we maintain fiscal responsibility to ensure that services are still provided? How do we ensure that municipalities are funded with the priorities they need, not necessarily everything they want but what is it that they need and what is it that we can afford to give them? They're key components of any government, key components of how we put our budget together and that's part and parcel of what any government has to do.

Sometimes you spend more because you base it on the principle there are certain services that have to be given to people and you go on the premise that you'll provide industries with an ability to create jobs, pay taxes, increase your revenues. You directly and partner with some of the main entities you have here. The mining and mineral industries you have here, the oil industry.

Sometimes then you look at your partnerships with your federal counterparts, that there will be joint agreements that offset some of your expenditures so that you can still provide services without having to invest the same amount of money, or you can invest the same amount of money and get more of a return on it

because you can provide a wider range of services. So that's part of the budgetary process. No doubt, every administration does that.

I know it's been touted here in the House by a number of ministers that one of their signature accomplishments is they've been able to leverage more money. Kudos to them, great on that. I think it's good when that happens. I think Ottawa has a responsibility to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador gets its fair share, in some cases because of the downturn in the economy and because we were so reliant on oil revenues and an industry that changes, that we have minimal control over.

The processes we've had in play, particularly around our royalty regimes, have been pretty good. We have gotten some good deals. Maybe early in the process it was a little bit different when the industry had a little bit more control over what they were doing, but the last decade, decade and a half, we've come a long way in ensuring that we receive an equitable share and equitable supports and financial benefits from the offshore industry. New companies coming in here realize that. They're coming in here to negotiate in good faith.

Those regimes have been put in play and the royalties we receive go a long way. Unfortunately, royalties are connected to what the price of a barrel of oil is and how the production is put out there. In some cases, due to demand, production is slower. In some cases there are circumstances beyond somebody's control. There's maintenance that has to be done on rigs. There are situations that have to be addressed that lower your production, which, in turn, has an impact on your revenues.

Your revenues then determine, if it's early in the development of your budget, what you're going to budget per line item and line department. If it's midway through, then obviously it has an impact on your deficit or your surplus. Obviously, we're realistic here. We know we're years away from surpluses. We have to modify exactly how we generate revenue, how we control our spending, how we take the key industries that are our bread and butter, and we have a number of them here.

We are fortunate enough that we all talk about diversification and we all, on either side of the House over the last decade or so, have tried to beat up each administration about diversification, but we have a number of key components here. Some are a little bit more fluent when it comes to financial rewards.

The oil industry and the mining industry can fluctuate, oil being a big part of it. We have great industries when it comes to our aerospace, our technology. We have it in our fishing industry. We have it in our tourism industry. We have it in our manufacturing. We're only now starting to get key components of manufacturing.

We've had an ability to diversify that. Any administration that goes through their budget lines has to look at – and, in some cases, has to try to indicate from the next three to five years where they think there's going to be peak areas that they can improve in their revenue streams. Some of it is left to vices that are beyond our control, and that would be more like the oil industry.

Other than change your royalty regime, which only happens X number of years, you can't go back looking for more. If you get a request for increase in productivity you can adjust that accordingly, but that's industry driven, as long as we ensure we have safeguards in play that are going to benefit the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's in play. It was in play with the previous administration and it's in play with this administration. So that's great. That's working well.

In the mining industry, and I know they've been reaching out to potential partners there in areas, particularly in Labrador, to try to find equitable ways to get investment here or to start projects that have been put on the backburner because the cost of a particular mineral has been down. I applaud the fact that we're still pushing the modem that we're open for business. We should be, and we're open to having open dialogue about how partnerships are developed and that we're investing in infrastructure so that it's more attractive for businesses to come here.

These are all positive things that any administration needs to do, but the government

needs to do so it ensures that the communities are viable and that not only this generation, but future generations know there are businesses out there and that there are potential revenue streams that would be beneficial.

I know there's been a big push, particularly over the last decade, in the tourism industry. We've hit it at a billion and I know we want to move it to 1.5 and we want to move it to 2 billion, because the tourism industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is unlimited. It's still untapped when it comes to the potential here. There are so many new attractions that can be noted here.

We, for the most part, have been more attractive to people who want to come for a different type of culture. From that perspective, a more relaxed, laid-back type of atmosphere. That's great, and that's what got us to being a major tourism destination.

We have all kinds of other attractive things that make us unique. It might be only attractive to a small sector but that small sector want to travel to look at that unique nuance or that unique attraction, and they have money. Their money is as good as anybody else. Their money helps to create jobs. Their money has helped to stimulate the economies. In a lot of cases, because these are unique attractions, they're in either more isolated, remote rural communities so they can have even more of an impact in sustaining the economies there.

I look at Mistaken Point, for example, how we've come over the last six or seven years, particularly. It's been around for years and been talked about and promoted by the community up there and promoted by different levels of bureaucracy to be able to promote it and international and national agencies, but now it's gotten to a peak where it's on the international stage. It can be an unbelievable draw for the Southern Shore, particularly around Portugal Cove South and all those areas up there.

MR. HUTCHINGS: The whole Southern Avalon.

MR. BRAZIL: The whole Southern Avalon would gain from it. Keep in mind, the Southern Avalon is one, but then the Northeast Avalon gains immensely from it because that's where

the hotels are. It's where the airports are and it's where people come and get settled at the beginning before they start to travel around. So it's a benefit for everybody in this part of it.

The more attractions we have, the more people come and see that and get familiar with our landscape, our culture, our attractions here, our open 'welcomeness' that people come back or they spread the word. They become as good ambassadors as the millions we spend on our ads, which are second to none.

There are things like that that we need to be able to ensure, we need to prioritize where we've investing. In some cases here, minimal investment is what gets you the maximum return because the natural attraction is what already exists. What's been beneficial is the people in those communities have been the real developers and have been the real drivers of ensuring that people understand what this is and the uniqueness, what it would mean to come and see something that you just don't see in any other province or any other country. You have to seek it out.

There might be small sectors, but there are sectors out here that we can draw on internationally, that will generate revenues, that will help, no doubt, sustain rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but would also help them further the tourism industry because they become our promoters and our ambassadors. We need to ensure we pick those six or eight new unique ones and invest enough in those to make them attractive enough and have the amenities that are necessary there, but we don't do that at the expense of the existing ones that have gotten us the notoriety of being one of the greatest tourism havens for people from all different backgrounds and sectors and cultures.

We need to have that balance here. That comes from dialogue between partners. It comes from dialogue with industry. It's part of dialogue with our national and international friends who are in the same business. We have that. So I do applaud the fact that there is still a priority around our tourism industry.

I do sometimes question, and we've had discussions here about ensuring that you don't neglect one when you're favouring something

else, or if you have something – the old cliché: If you got a fish on the hook, make sure you reel it in. We have a couple of great ones that are working here.

There are some great ones in Labrador with our national park system that we need to be able to promote. As I mentioned, Mistaken Point is another great opportunity for us to be able to develop another tourism sector that specifically targets a group that would want to come here. We need to be able to be open to do those types of things so when we do that, it's very important.

As I mentioned, we've got a diverse set of industries here. We'll talk about the fishing industry, and we all know there are a multitude of challenges here. Some are controlled outside of our realm here, but the plan has to be – and I think this is another one of those things that would unify the province, and particularly us as politicians about us taking a full-fledged stand together about getting our fair share here. And we talk about things around adjacency and quotas and ensuring that there are proper science investments here. So these are all positive things that are necessary so that we continue to do what previous administrations have done and this current administration is doing, trying to find ways to diversify our revenue streams. And we need to be able to continue that whole dialogue.

So sometimes instead of it being confrontational here in the House of Assembly, let's have a discussion. We've talked about all-party committees on various sectors. We did a great thing on mental health, and you're starting to see the fruits of that labour now with some new programs and services. My hon. colleague had just mentioned earlier about the next steps towards replacing the Waterford Hospital, and that's a great step forward. That goes along with a number of the other programs and services that have been implemented over the last 18 months or so around mental health – all positive things.

That's about a service. Because if you invest into a service, you've obviously invested in the people, which means there's less of a drawdown and demand on our society, which means then you can go back into generating your revenue streams. The fishing industry is another avenue around that. But to deal with ensuring a revenue

stream that's equitable and continuous, you've got to address some of the inequalities that are in it. Some of the inequalities are somebody outside of our realm here are making decisions that have a direct impact on us, and in some cases – and we're all aware of it – favour some other jurisdictions that is not based on the same principle if there was a decision made against us when it's a decision made against them.

They're concerns that I have and, no doubt, every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has around those types of things. So we need to ensure we get to that point again, particularly around the fishing industry. The fishing industry is probably the weakest thing that I know about. Somebody once said: What do you know? I know a little bit about a lot of things. The fishing industry, unfortunately, is one of the things I don't know a lot about, but I can guarantee you I've learned more about it in the last six months. Because when you start hearing from people about the challenges and some of the things that need to be done, then you want to make sure, is this accurate, is it just self-serving in one area, is it one community being pitted against another, and you start to realize no, our province is being pitted against other entities outside.

So how do get ourselves back on an even keel? For years – don't forget, before Confederation, Canada I think was number 14 in the world for fishing industry, what it meant. When Newfoundland joined Canada, it went to number eight, so that tells you the importance of the fishing industry here. That tells you more importantly about what that meant to Canada, what they generated from that financially.

They used it also for political will. There were trade-offs. I had a former MP who was a former superstar hockey player one time that I worked with back in the '80s and I was in his house having a conversation and we talked about Newfoundland and Labrador, and he had the utmost respect for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians but talked about one of the trade-offs was the fishing industry and it was something that the federal government could use as a trade-off internationally to sell other products. One of the things at the time, those days, was the CANDU reactors. He had shared stories with me that part of some of the companies that they had done business with here

giving quotas or turning a blind eye to inside our 200-mile limit in overfishing to ensure that those contracts went through.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

MR. BRAZIL: You're right; it is shameful. I do understand the rationale because, at the end of the day, a billion dollars versus \$150 million sounded good to them. But to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we're the ones who were on the brunt of a loss there. If they had said we're going to take your losses in the fishing industry and put it back into new technology in fishing or new species development or something else that would have been of benefit to those communities affected, then I would have said, hats off, we're all part of this great country of ours, we all have to do our part to ensure that we survive here and that we can diversify and that, at the end of the day, we can move back and forth to any parts of our country and know that we have sustainable employment.

There are things there around those types of partnerships to ensure that our revenue streams are consistent that need to be put as a priority. I'm glad that they're noted in the budget as areas of concern. Concern with: How do you maintain that with minimum amounts of money that you can invest? And you may not have big, extra influx of revenues to be able to put into it but how do you mainstream it? How do you develop better partnerships as part of that whole process? There has been some development there that I think will work in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians if they're followed through, but we need to be able to stand our ground on that.

I will note, in my last three minutes here, one of the key positive things that I like about this budget was the investment in education and early childhood development. We've had some great bantering issues in this House here back and forth. We've had some great debate. We've had a difference of opinion on certain policies and investments in certain areas in education. We've all agreed – I don't think there was anybody here who didn't agree we had to find ways to improve our education system. I think this budget is, by far, the most positive thing I've seen in this budget in any department but

particularly when it comes to addressing the education needs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I said at the beginning, I give kudos when something good is being done. I'll go on the attack when something bad is being done. In this case here, the investments here, the minister in this budget has delivered on some of his opening policies of things that he wanted to achieve as minister. The task force was a great independent approach to ensure that proper input was put in before a set of recommendations because sometimes we see it in our own little silos. You need to see it from the outside and you need to see every sector have their input into that.

So I'm still waiting at the end of the day. I won't give it an A plus yet. I'll give it a B plus, but I need to see how it develops because there are going to be some, obviously, challenges and nuances and that, but I'm very hopeful. I'm very hopeful. I've read it. I've gone through it. I've read the report. I've looked at the analysis –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – the amount of money invested. I'd like for it to be more and I guess so would the minister but you've have to be cognizant of the budget you have. I do like the fact of where the money is being budgeted is the right amounts, in the right categories, to address the right issues, at the right time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: So I'll give that. That's the kudo I'll give here because it's realistic and it's the right one to give.

I'm personally looking forward to how we address the reading specialist, for example – a big advocate. I think if you're going to improve your education system where there are some challenges, you need to have reading as one of your key priorities and investing in reading specialists in particular schools is a positive. You can't go wrong with those types of things.

Looking at inclusive education, extra supports that are necessary there, no doubt – and I know there are going to be continuous issues with

people needing extra supports. I would hope – this is a live entity – we’re going to keep adding to it as we go further down the road.

I’ve already met with a school recently that needed a reading specialist. When I checked to see which schools have them, I’m not quite sure if they were on the list, but if they’re not, I’ll have a chat with the minister to have this discussion to see if the rationale is there and what was behind it. But the fact that it’s an investment gives hope to these schools that may not have it yet but have identified the need for a reading specialist, but to more appropriately identify the positive impact that it would have down the road.

Mr. Speaker, with that, as I outlined, we need to develop better partnerships. We need to be able to prioritize and things are falling in line, but I do want to note that the investments in education are a positive step forward. I’m looking forward to having a little bit more debate on this and seeing how this unwinds.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi.

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

I’m quite happy to stand today and speak to the non-confidence vote in the budget debate. We have a hard job as MHAs, and especially when you’re an MHA that’s not in government. The hard job is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I ask for order, please. I’m having difficulty hearing the Member speaking.

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

The hard job is that things don’t work for everybody. I’m sure there are all kinds of people for whom this budget is working and working

fine, but there are all kinds of people for whom it’s not working and won’t work.

Those people come to us as MHAs when the system is not working for them. They come to us when they’re not getting health care the way the system says they’re going to get it. They come to us if they can’t get adequate housing. They come to us if there are cuts to home care and they are suffering because of that. They come to us if they can’t afford to get the bus in the city in order to go to a health appointment. They come to us when the system is not working. Very often they are hoping – I guess they’re always hoping – we’re going to be able to do something about it.

When we bring forth the issues that have been brought to us, especially when we do it here in the context of the House of Assembly, we then get pegged as being negative and being naysayers and not seeing the positive. The reality is it’s hard not to see the positive when people are coming to you with their problems. It’s very hard not to.

If I go into a house in my district and I see the condition of somebody who is living in a boarding room, sleeping on the floor with no place to put what they own and no place to cook, having to go out in the daytime to go to a place like The Gathering Place in order to have food, in order to have warmth, in order to have company, when you see that kind of thing it’s really hard to feel positive. And that’s not saying that government doesn’t care. That’s saying we have a lot of people who are suffering and we have a lot of people for whom the system is not working.

Our job is to recognize that. Our job is to bring that forward. Our job is to reveal those realities. That’s what we’re here for. That’s why people voted for us. That’s why people want us here in this House so that we can represent their cares, so that we can represent what isn’t working.

I remember back in the 1990s, the early 1990s, I was living in Toronto at that time and it was the day of Harris. Harris came in and his main principle was to cut, cut, cut to save money. To cut, to work on the deficit and he turned the province upside down.

The interesting thing was for me, as somebody from Newfoundland and Labrador who was living there, I had people all around me who were protesting. I understood the protests and I took part in some of those protests. I was a social justice activist at the time. I remember saying to my friends in Ontario: you know, I don't believe with what Harris is doing. I don't believe at all in what Harris is doing but the difficult thing for me, as I said it to them, is that the cuts you're undergoing here in Ontario, it's cuts in things that we don't even have yet in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The reason I would join in the protests was because I didn't want the direction that Harris was going in to become a model for the rest of the country. Even though the cuts that were happening I could say are cuts to things that we don't even have yet, I knew that mentality of cutting was something that could become contagious. So that's why I did protest what Harris was doing.

We didn't have the home care they had there. Guess what? We still don't have home care that is part of our public care system. We didn't have dental care for adults that was being cut back a bit. Guess what? We had it here and now it's gone again – 20 years later. We didn't have pharmacare for seniors. Cuts were being made to that in Ontario. Guess what? We don't have it here now.

Twenty years later, I still would have to say to my friends in Ontario that stuff you're concerned about getting cut we don't even have. That's an awful situation, Mr. Speaker. It's a terrible situation. We have to be looking at building budgets that are there for the people, building budgets that are there to make life better for people.

While it's great to say that depending on who you are and what your goals are, that our deficit is going down, down, down and the deficit is going to be gone – by '22 is it? What does that mean to the person who is unemployed and to the increase in numbers of unemployed in the province?

To me, what we need to be looking at is why is our unemployment – it has gone up, and the expectation of government in its budget

document called *The Economy*, the expectation is it's not going to get any better over the next year. It's going to stay where it is. Well, then why should somebody be happy because government is saying to them we're getting rid of the deficit? Because their answer is you're getting rid of the deficit on our backs.

I dared last week when I spoke to talk about economists who say and who have proof that concentrating on cutting deficits is not the way to go if you want to build your economy. Just deficit reduction being the goal is not the way to go.

My colleague representing Gander sort of mocked that and talked about economy having been called the dismal science. Well, I guess he meant economics but that's not what he said. It is called the dismal science and has been called the dismal science for years.

Well, we have an awful lot of economists in this world, in our country and on this planet who know what they're talking about. So when we put forward the analysis of economists who say the kind of budget building that this government has been doing is not the way to go to help people, I follow them. And they're not people who have political colours. They're not people who are right and left, right or left. They are economists who are neutral and who really look at what happens when you go in a certain direction.

Back in the '70s and '80s when the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund started treating developing countries in a way and said you've got to cut your social programming, you've got to cut this, you've got to cut that. You have to make sure you haven't got debt. And what happened? Life became worse in the developing countries when that happened.

Guess what? The International Monetary Fund changed its tune and the World Bank changed its tune as well because they knew that wasn't the way to go. They found out it wasn't the way to go. Things got worse.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: We have to look at what's not working. When government says oh, look, we're putting this amount of money into infrastructure – yeah, that's \$691 million, but it's putting it into what you had to put money into. That's what government is here for. We can't have our roads falling apart. We got some that are falling apart. But we can't have our roads falling apart. Yes, we put money into maintenance of school buildings, hospitals and clinics, of the very building that we're standing in, because you have to. That's what government is there for.

I can't get excited because a budget is doing what it should be doing. But when I look at a document like the government's own document – and I'm not sure how many of them have actually read this – and you look at what's called the Highlights and Expectations, I wonder what we mean by highlights because there are more lowlights than highlights. One of the highlights of *The Economy* – the book is called, government's own document –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – household income has gone down in real terms by 0.5 per cent. That's a highlight of our economy right now. What's another highlight of our economy? Employment fell by 3.7 per cent, reflecting lower construction activity on several major projects. So employment fell, that's a highlight of our economy right now.

What's another highlight of our economy right now? The unemployment rate averaged 14.8 per cent, an increase of 1.4 percentage points compared to the previous year. That's a highlight of our economy. What's another highlight of our economy? Consumer prices rose by 2.4 per cent, as gasoline and fuel oil prices put upward pressure on the overall price level. Then you add to that the increase in taxes that go on top of that and you see how hard it is for people, on whose backs that consumer price is placed, that's a highlight.

Another highlight of our economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador is that our real gross domestic product declined by 3.4 per cent in 2017, primarily due to lower levels of capital

investment related to the major projects that have to do with oil production. Here's where we get to the crux of the problem, is that we have such a heavy dependence on oil, such a heavy dependence on what's happening in the oil industry in this province that a lot of the highlights, that are really lowlights, are related to the fact that we depend so much on the oil industry.

We talk about and the government used the language of diversification, but I don't see it. But when I think about diversification, I really get excited about what could be happening in our province. Just let's look at tourism. We have so much in this province, Mr. Speaker. You just take, number one, the fact that we have four UNESCO World Heritage Sites in this province. When you take the beauty of the province, when you take the history of the province, you put all that together and you think why can't there be a full plan, a full tourist plan that government is part of developing with the tourism industry, and how we bring all those things together. Put together tourist packages that highlight different aspects of who we are as a province. Go after the target. Go after the people who would want to take that tourism package and run with it.

Why don't we plan that way? No, what we do is we have these silos and programs go on in silos, but we don't look at how we can work together within our own system and come up with plans that could really bring in so many more people into the province. Most of us have the benefit of being able to travel outside of Canada – most of us in this room, I mean. I don't mean most of the people in the province, but most of us in this room. I am sure many of us have experienced countries where you are overwhelmed, number one, by the professionalism of the tourism industry. And we have a wonderful tourism industry here. Hospitality NL is doing so much to improve where we are.

When I go into some countries, you get overwhelmed by how organized it is, by how well the system works. You go into countries, for example, where government is involved in training tour guides and they target the languages that are going to be in that country. They target well, a lot of German speakers come here. Their people are trained to speak German.

We have a lot of Spanish-speaking people who here. Their people are trained to speak Spanish.

Now, we're a small population here and I'm not suggesting that; however, I am suggesting that somebody who comes from Quebec and doesn't speak English and comes to Newfoundland and Labrador, they are hard pressed to find services in French.

We need to be looking at: Who are the targets? What are the target audiences? Who are the people that we could draw here? Are there people out there – you take a little country like Belize, for example; they understood really early on, and they are a very poor country, but that ecological tourism was going to be a big thing for them. Well, we could do the same thing here and have a whole focus on ecological tourism. There are people out there and that's what they're looking for. When they come here, that's what they're looking for.

There are also people who, when they come here, want an urban experience. They do want to do down on George Street, fine. That's also part of our tourism package, but we are so narrow in our thinking, Mr. Speaker. That's really what frustrates me to no end is how small we are in our thinking. If we stay focused on deficit reduction, that keeps you narrow in your thinking because that becomes the boogeyman, the deficit, while our unemployment rate goes up, while our job numbers go down, that is the reality we have to deal with. While seniors are having their home care hours cut.

So instead of somebody being able to have personal care every day, they're getting personal care for two hours every second day. Sometimes they're getting it twice a week. Well, let's think about what that personal care means. That personal care means being able to take care of your body, being able to clean yourself, being able to wash your hair. People who need help being told you can have that personal care twice a week, that's not good enough. That's not good enough at all.

When you have people who have too much income in order to qualify for dental care, but that too much income is not too much income at all in terms of the cost of living that they have to face – so they have to let their teeth, literally, rot

in their heads because they can't get dental care. That's not good enough.

I know there are MHAs in the room, like myself, who have had people say to them, their own constituents say: I can't afford to pay for my medication. It's documented by the health care system that you have seniors who cut their dosage in half because they can't afford to pay. They cut their dosage in half. There should not be any senior in this province who cannot have the medication that they need, Mr. Speaker.

That's why I'd like to see this government become much more vocal about a pharmacare program, become much more vocal about working with Ottawa to really push and promote a pharmacare program. There is so much that needs to be done. That's the kind of thing I'd like to see this government talk about.

I'd like to see this government talking to Ottawa about a national child care program, because if we had a national framework – I'm not trying to put all the responsibility on the provincial government. We need a national framework. We need a national child care program. Then we could build with the federal system our child care program.

We need to put home care into our health care system, as other provinces have done. We need home care to be recognized under our MCP so that it isn't only when you're dying for a few days that you can get home care. It isn't only when you've come home from hospital for a couple of weeks that you can get home care paid for under our MCP. It is part of our system.

This government needs to broaden its thinking. It needs to look at what does exist elsewhere in Canada. It needs to look at what help we need from Ottawa, and not just help in equalization, but help by Ottawa being a government that is putting national frameworks in place that then allows a province like us, that is smaller and has the challenges we have, that allows us to put in the programs we need for the good of the people. To put it in because it's part of a national federal-provincial framework, and to put in what we need for our people to have their needs met. That should be their goal.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't normally get that much applause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to stand here and say a few words about the 2018 budget.

First, though, I'd like to say, I haven't had an opportunity to speak on the budget yet, or to speak as freely as we can in the budget debate. Last week was Volunteer Week, and I just want to acknowledge the great work that's done by volunteers across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of course, in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, which I have the privilege of serving in the minister's office, we have three major volunteer boards that work with the department. Those are the two school districts, the English and the French, who are comprised of boards of trustees who are entirely there by their own volition, they're volunteers.

Then, also the provincial Libraries Board which is also made up of volunteers who are not remunerated in any way. They are just carrying out that work for the people in our communities on an elected basis and on an appointed basis because they believe in either the value of literacy or the value of education or both. I want to thank them very much for their work.

I want to thank all of the community associations in the District of Mount Scio as well. Last Wednesday night I had the privilege of being at the Paradise Municipal Awards where they handed out a variety of awards to folks in Paradise, which is part of the District of Mount Scio, for all the things they do for that community.

This morning, in fact, I was at Larkhall Academy, just up by the Avalon Mall in my district, and had an opportunity to thank the breakfast program volunteers there and, actually,

to have a bit of fun handing out grab-and-go breakfasts to all the kids that came in. That's by far the best part of my job. I often say I have the best job in this government. Some would argue about that, but the best thing about this job is being able to go into schools and see the great things that people are doing in our schools. Seeing the great things that teachers are doing. Teachers are going above and beyond the call of duty to do things that just are absolutely mindboggling, and I hope I have time to talk about some of those things.

To see what students are doing; I know just a couple of weeks ago I was up on the North Coast of Labrador with my colleague, the MHA for Torngat Mountains. We visited students and teachers in schools in Makkovik, in Postville and in Hopedale. It's been the absolute joy of my work. There are 268 schools in Newfoundland and Labrador and I have 100 left to go, because I've been to 168 of them so far. It's been an absolute pleasure to do that.

It really boils down to getting information from people who know more than I do, who know a lot more than I do about what's going on in schools. I often say to them, I could sit in Confederation Building in my office here in St. John's and more or less be briefed on things or I can go out and get it right from the horse's mouth. I have to say, I've always gotten a very nice reception at schools. I'm telling you – and I say to anybody who's watching the live video feed from the House of Assembly – our children are in good hands because there's a lot of good work going on out there.

This budget this year really marks the continuation of a transformation that's happening in our education system, and a positive one at that. A positive transformation for early learning and child care through the continuum of a K to 12 system, supporting the principles of early literacy, accessible education and skills development and creating an environment for career development, for job creation and for better educational outcomes.

That's a critical thing. Building a better future for all of us in Newfoundland and Labrador by investing in our children. It's cliché; it's funny. I had the great opportunity to go the federal Liberal convention in Halifax on the weekend

and I bought a T-shirt there for my son. In French it says, and my French is very bad so I'm not going to attempt it but it says, basically: Leader of today.

Whenever I talk to students, I say: People say you are the leaders of tomorrow. I say: That's not true. You're leaders of today and tomorrow. I genuinely feel that about our young people, you can see it. You just look at the news recently; we have a lot of children, students in our province who are courageous and taking leadership on difficult issues and bringing issues to the fore. We are going to be in good hands.

In addition to visiting 168 schools over the past couple of years, I've also been in more than 40 child care centres in the province. It's amazing to see the mesh between what's going on in early learning and care pedagogically and what's happening with full-day kindergarten. I go into child care centres and then I go to a full-day kindergarten class and I can't tell the difference sometimes. It is absolutely meshing.

The curriculum is very similar. The notion of play-based learning is practiced in both venues and now we see what we're doing with coding in schools. We made an announcement about that recently with coding in schools, with computational thinking, with maker education. Especially with maker education and robotics and coding, that play-based learning is not strictly focused to kindergarten.

I've known this all of my life as an educator. If you make learning fun, if you make it interesting, it's more engaging and the audience is more receptive. It's just one small part of reaching children in the classroom, whether it's in a child care room or in grade 12. It's really an essential component and it is going on out there. I wish I had the time to recount all of the amazing things I have seen because it's quite mindboggling.

The other thing I think that's incredibly important is that we have to listen to what we tell our children ourselves. We tell our children always strive and aspire to continue to grow, develop and improve. Any government in any jurisdiction has to always try to grow, develop and improve. We've had some rocky times. It's funny, people say to me, you must have a thick

skin and so on and so forth, but it's a privilege for us to do these jobs.

Before I came to the House of Assembly I was a university professor and I thought that was the best job I could ever have had, but that's actually not the case. That's the second best job I ever had, because being able to serve in this Cabinet under the leadership of the Premier and being able to make these changes and see them through, to have confidence in our educators, in our public systems, it's been the absolute pleasure of my life. It's been the best thing that's ever happened to me.

The Premier, prior to the last election, he and I had a lot of conversations about what we would do should we have the privilege of forming a government here. I was the Education critic for our caucus prior to the last election and we committed, he committed to having this task force on improving educational outcomes to basically do a top to bottom review of our education system. Prior to that, really it was as far back as, I think, 2003 that there was a major examination of this sort done. It was a long time ago.

I believe Judy Foote – and she wouldn't like me to say it was a long time ago, but Judy Foote, our incoming Lieutenant-Governor, I believe she was actually the Minister of Education that oversaw the last major review of this sort of education in our province. That task force is part of *The Way Forward*, part of our overall plan for the province to get things back on track.

Interestingly enough, the task force was one of the first series of appointments to go through the Independent Appointments Commission. When we got in here, folks were pretty intent on our government following through on that particular recommendation but it took some time. We had to pass the independent appointments legislation. They had to apply. They had to go through the whole process and so on.

It took some time to get the task force up and running, but we wanted to have a clear and comprehensive picture of the education system. We wanted to look at our strengths and the areas that we could improve upon. That task force, after they were appointed, did extensive consultations throughout the province with

teachers, with parents, with students, stakeholder groups. I mean the list is as long as my arm. They did a lot of consultations and they really looked at a variety of priority areas.

Inclusive education, we talked a lot about that when we were in Opposition, the need to make improvements to the practice.

Early learning and care, the education that is essential in early years. I agree with Members of the Opposition, I am absolutely intent on, before I go to my grave, seeing a far more universally accessible, affordable, quality system of early learning and care in not just this province but the rest of the country.

We're building a system piece by piece, and this year the most we have ever invested in early learning and care in our history, some \$62 million, really facilitated by an agreement we have with the federal government to get \$22 million from them over a three-year period; but \$62 million is a tremendous sum if you just go back a few short years ago and look at what we're investing in early learning and care. That was also facilitated by the task force, because we asked them to put it in their mandate.

They looked at mathematics. They looked at reading. They looked at student mental health and wellness. They looked at multicultural education, indigenous education, co-op education and, most importantly, teacher professional education and professional development.

That is crucial, because in everything we're doing, whether it is the implementation of the task force or our recent announcement on coding, computational thinking and maker education, all of our initiatives are basically underlain by one key premise, is if you're going to make changes in the education system, not only do they need to be funded – if you're bringing in new initiatives and you're asking teachers to do this additionally, and principals to do that additionally so that children can have a different kind of educational experience, you have to provide professional development because things change in education.

If somebody graduates from Memorial University of Newfoundland this semester with

a bachelor of education, five years from now things will be somewhat different, 10 years from now things are going to be even more different, 15 years and hence things get a whole lot different.

Just by virtue of the cellphone alone, who would have thought – when I was in school, the Internet was in its infancy. Email was something people were just starting to talk about. Who would have thought that just in a few years we would be all carrying around devices like this, the power of technology right in your pocket, right in your hand? That just really speaks to the way the education system has to change.

We hear all today about the changes that are coming with driverless vehicles, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, block chain technology. All these things are coming and if we don't give our children the tools to deal with the new workforce of the future, they're not going to be where we need them to be.

That's why we are providing professional development to teachers comprehensively with all of the new initiatives that we are rolling out. Like I said, whether that's the coding and computational thinking and maker education or all of the other initiatives that are associated with the task force implementation.

The new focus on early reading intervention, early literacy, focus on ensuring more support in learning to read, school reading, reading intervention, resources, assistance with changing the way mathematics is currently dealt with, the way we currently deal with that, so much focus on teacher professional development.

I could go on for some time about this but I am running out of time. I was asked to speak for 15 minutes. So I'm going to take my seat. I call this my 12-hour speech. I've got a lot here that I could continue to say about the budget. Should I get another opportunity, I'd really look forward to talking about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would adjourn debate on the budget.

MR. SPEAKER: The debate is adjourned.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Given the hour of the day, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House to now adjourn.

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

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.'

AN HON. MEMBER: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Despite the nay, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.