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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA*

Wednesday

May 16, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

**Orders of the Day**

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 13.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against?

This motion is carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991. (Bill 13)

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 13)

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, third reading of Bill 14.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against?

This motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families. (Bill 14)

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

On motion, a bill, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 14)

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, second reading of Bill 8.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader that Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 8 entitled An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.” (Bill 8)

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments that are needed to bring this act in – what we’re doing with this act essentially, Mr. Speaker, is changes to the search and rescue tax credit that we announced as part of *Budget 2018*.

We were honoured, myself and the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port East, I think it is called –

**MR. FINN:** Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. OSBORNE:** – Stephenville - Port au Port, who brought the idea to me during the budget consultations. I know that the Minister of Service NL and the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, we did a news conference a couple of weeks ago with the St. John’s Rovers regarding this issue. There were a number of search and rescue organizations from across the Island came into the city.

This is something that search and rescue volunteers have been asking for, for quite some time. Volunteer firefighters currently have the tax credit; the tax credit is a \$3,000 tax credit. You need 200 hours of volunteer time in order to apply for the tax credit on your income tax.

What we’re doing in this act is bringing it in line with the volunteer firefighters’ act. We are allowing any individual who volunteer for both search and rescue and the volunteer firefighter to combine their hours. They can only claim either one tax credit or the other, but we’re allowing individuals to combine their hours to give them a total of 200 hours because some individuals throughout the province volunteer for both search and rescue as well as volunteer firefighting. We felt it was appropriate to allow individuals to combine their hours.

Mr. Speaker, those individuals who dedicate their time in excess of 200 hours per year, it’s a very fitting reward for them for government to recognize their time, the valuable hours that they

put into search and rescue, saving lives, the valuable hours that they put into volunteer firefighting and give very selflessly of their time as a volunteer. This tax credit, while it’s not a huge cost to the province, is certainly a big benefit to those individuals who volunteer their time and provide that volunteer service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can’t overstate how impressed I am with the commitment of volunteers who do search and rescue or volunteer firefighters, and the level of skill they bring to search and rescue throughout our province, but I’m also impressed with the level of composure and focus that they bring to difficult and often traumatic situations. Under very difficult circumstances, our province’s search and rescue volunteers face demanding situations head-on, helping others, in what is often their darkest hours. It’s for those reasons that we expanded government’s support for first responders by introducing the search and rescue tax credit.

The tax credit, as I said, will allow a \$3,000 non-refundable tax credit starting January 1, 2019 on their provincial income tax returns. They require the 200 hours, as I said. So the provincial government along with WorkplaceNL have made several enhancements in recent years to help volunteers, first responders and will continue to stand behind them as they provide their services to the people of the Newfoundland and Labrador.

Throughout the province some people might actually be surprised, Mr. Speaker, to learn that Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association is comprised of 27 teams and have more than 1,000 volunteers throughout the province. That’s really quite impressive for those individuals to give so selflessly of their time to help others in, as I said, what is sometimes a very traumatic situation.

The search and rescue volunteers work hard to bring those people home safely to their families. Most of the time, they are able to bring the individuals home safely. We know of just recently snowmobilers on the Northern Peninsula and I believe in Labrador were highlighted in the news and those searches were successful. They found the individuals and brought them home.

So without the help of these 1,000 volunteers throughout the province, that would not always be the case. We wouldn't always see a situation where they were able to bring somebody home safely. So the tax credit that we're putting forward, Mr. Speaker, is a very small cost to the provincial government, but it's a very, very large benefit to those volunteers.

It's important that we do whatever we can to support the volunteers who play such an important role in search and rescue operations in Newfoundland and Labrador. These people, the men and women who volunteer their time in search and rescue, Mr. Speaker, are an integral part of the public safety in this province. The work they do is extremely important. As a government we recognize that work, which is why we're offering this tax credit in this year's budget. Our government will always seek opportunities to support those individuals who spend their time supporting families throughout our province.

I would particularly like to recognize, Mr. Speaker, the head of the Rovers Search and Rescue who put together the opportunity that we had for the news conference two or three weeks ago where myself, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port and the Minister of Justice and Public Safety were greeted very respectfully and welcomed into that facility. It was an honour to be able to look at some of the equipment they use throughout the province and the technology they use. I'm very impressed with the command centres they use. The Rovers Search and Rescue, I wanted to send a thank you to them as well for organizing that event and welcoming us to their facility and showing us some of what they do, but, as well, other operators throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port has a great deal of respect for first responders. As I said, it was his idea during the budget consultations. A number of the changes we made in this year's budget were as a result of listening not only to individuals throughout the province in the pre-budget consultations, but Members of the House of Assembly. We put an invitation out to all Members to come to us and provide us with ideas. Those Members who did, where we were able to incorporate those ideas into *Budget 2018*, we certainly did.

Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinary that in our busy world there are so many people that are so willing to give freely of their time. This new tax credit is intended to reward those volunteers for the good work they do. The amendments we're making today are to put this program into effect. Through these amendments, we are making changes that will allow us to reward and recognize the good work of the volunteers that work in search and rescue.

Mr. Speaker, included in these amendments, we're looking at the combined total of tax credits as \$5,000, which is consistent with volunteer firefighters. We also looked at making some small amendments to educational and training tax credits that have to be used. If you're transferring tax credits to a spouse or a parent, your volunteer tax credit has to be used prior to being able to transfer your educational tax credits. So that's a part of these amendments as well. It's generally housekeeping in order to put into effect the recognition that we want to provide to the volunteers throughout the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will say that it's a pleasure to stand and recognize the tireless work of our search and rescue volunteers throughout our province and how this amendment will ensure that these dedicated volunteers will have additional financial support as a reward for the good work they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand to speak to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, and deal specifically with search and rescue volunteers. As the minister said, bringing the tax credit availability to that group of volunteers who do tremendous work in our communities and regions in times of crisis in many cases where search and rescue skills and expertise are required and do that right across our province. This recognizes their work on a volunteer basis and gives a tax credit related to that activity.

This comes in line with what was introduced in 2018, I do believe, in regard to volunteer firefighters and being able to access the firefighters' tax credit.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, when you look at statistics in volunteerism on a per capita basis, we have some of the highest rates of volunteerism in the country. Based on that, it's important that we recognize the activities, certainly volunteer firefighters, search and rescue volunteers as well and the work they do and how critical they are in our communities, especially our smaller communities, where they keep these fire brigades operational and as well, from the search and rescue point of view, in times of need they're there.

They're usually there in the regions in communities and they're accessible very quickly in a time of need like that. So they play a critical role in our communities, in our regions. When we talk about sustainability of areas in parts of our province, they play a key role in having that service and people having the comfort level of living in those communities and regions because those volunteers exist.

This tax credit looks at giving back to this group of people and the work they do. The Search and Rescue Volunteer Tax Credit, as we're talking about here in this particular bill, will be identical to the firefighters' tax credit.

The minister has referenced the fact that 200 hours of service is required. My understanding, based on the bill, is that's cumulative and can be used for either activity. We do have people that are involved in many activities in their community and in volunteerism, and could be involved in a volunteer firefighting brigade and as well, involved in a search and rescue volunteer fire brigade. Collectively, if they put in different hours in different activities, they can avail up to 200 hours – use it in both of those activities, the 200 hours to avail of the tax credit.

The credit would be \$3,000 taxed at 8.7 per cent. This tax credit was announced in this *Budget 2018* and my understanding is it can be availed of in taxation year 2019. When individuals are doing their personal income tax they can draw down on that tax credit at that point in time.

A question I had reading through the bill – and probably when we get to Committee the minister can speak to it. I said about the large number of volunteers we have in the province and in volunteer fire brigades and the number of people that are involved in that. I'm just wondering if the minister in Committee could maybe get some information in regard to the number of registered volunteer firefighters and the uptake that's been seen on the actual tax credits since it's come in for volunteer firefighters because it's relevant here. One would ask are people aware of it? Has it been availed of? It's important that those volunteers would be aware of it and could avail of it.

Then, looking forward, I think he mentioned in regard to the search and rescue and the numbers, I think he referenced the number of maybe 1,000 in regard to those that are involved in search and rescue. Those would be volunteers that could avail of this actual tax credit in 2019. I guess that would be the projected of 1,000 who could be available. It's always good to make them aware that this tax credit is available to them and they can avail of it based on their service up to – and requiring 200 hours of service.

I know from the search and rescue point of view, I've seen it myself over the past number of years in regard to the role they play. I refer to a number of years ago we were in the Avalon wilderness, into Frank's Pond with a group of people, there was a gentleman with a young son who went off for the day to a fishing hole, didn't make it back to camp, darkness came and there was a call made to the local search and rescue volunteer group.

They arrived late at night, it was probably about 11 o'clock and it was a very nervous time for the family indeed. Luckily enough, it all worked out well, but it just goes to the unique situations that can occur. It's not a good place, if anyone is familiar with the outdoors and certainly the Avalon wilderness, once darkness comes, the temperature drops, and there could be challenges and dangers to everybody. But these are the kinds of people that are involved in activities that could be called upon to go out and assist, and what this bill does is certainly recognize that activity, that commitment and what they do.

The other thing about it is this is not an activity, for these folks, that's 9 to 5. Most of these activities happen late at night and, oftentimes, in extreme conditions. It's not just a 9 to 5 in the perfect conditions outdoors that they would respond to certain activities. It is unique in what they do.

The provisions of the bill and the various sections that have been amended – clause 1 adds the definition needed for the tax credit. From my understanding, the definitions are in line with the federal act and tax credits, and that's in clause 1. Clause 2, this adds 17.4 to the legislation and adds the search and rescue tax credit to the order and to various provisions.

The other provisions in it look at – and the minister mentioned this as well – referencing the fact about the transfer of unused education credits and fully utilized other tax credits before being able to avail of this actual search and rescue tax credit first. I think the minister had mentioned that as well when he was up.

Then it goes on and parts of it talks about, as I said before, using jointly the two activities of volunteerism, the firefighting component and the search and rescue component, to get to the required 200 hours as indicated in the bill.

You can't receive – and the minister said this as well – two of the tax credits cumulatively one on top of the other, stack them I guess, in terms of that regard; but cumulatively, you can receive them up to the maximum, up the cap that exists.

From our perspective, Mr. Speaker, in terms of this bill, I thank the minister for bringing it forward in regard to our volunteers and all the work they do. As I said, there are a few questions there that are brought up. Maybe in Committee we can have a short discussion on those and some of the indicators of what's been availed of to date in regard to the volunteer firefighters, what's the expectation or how do we market and make those volunteers aware that this exists so those that partake can fully utilize the tax credit to the benefit of them and their families.

We look forward to that and having a chat on that in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, am pleased this morning to rise and speak to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. I'm particularly happy to do this because of the content of this bill which has –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Which both the minister and the Member for Ferryland have spoken to in terms of the details of this bill, something I think which is long overdue. It's certainly something which has been sought for and spoken to by people who are involved in search and rescue in this province as volunteers and is also involved in firefighting.

We do know that this tax credit which we are talking about here today, a tax credit for search and rescue volunteers, is something that does exist in the federal tax act. Of course, our provincial act should be parallel with the federal act. I think it's important. It was necessary that this be brought in to our provincial tax and will be administered in a parallel way with the federal tax.

I won't go into the details of the bill; the minister and the Member for Ferryland have done that. It basically is technical. You do have the definition in there of adding search and rescue volunteers to the list of people who get tax credits in doing this kind of volunteer work. Then you have all of the technical ways in which that gets dealt with inside of the taxation system. The important thing is that this credit is going in place.

A lot of people may not realize but people who voluntarily do this search and rescue work pay for expenses out of their own pockets. The equipment that they use comes out of their own

pockets. For example, nowadays they use GPS, obviously; have always used compasses, they're still in use; proper clothing. They use gas in driving to and from the sites where they're involved in doing the search and rescue work. All of these expenses – a GPS alone can cost \$500.

So giving a tax credit I think will really help to – the minister used the term reward the volunteers, and I think it's a recognition of not just the time that they put into this and not just the human danger in which they put themselves, but also the money that comes out of their own pockets to pay for the equipment that they use. So this is a recognition, I think, of all of that. There are 27 search and rescue groups in this province, and all of them, obviously, have welcomed this tax credit.

This has been asked for, for a long time, as the minister has pointed out. Recognition of volunteers is extremely important, but especially these volunteers – and this goes along with the firefighters as well, the volunteer firefighters, because they are involved in something which has to do with life and death in our province. It amazes me – it really does – when I hear of the situations in which they put themselves in, in order to help the community and to help the people of this province, and to make sure the people of this province are kept safe.

I was delighted when the budget speech said this was going to come in, and we are happy as the caucus here to support this bill today. The credit itself will start on January 1 of 2019, which means in 2020 when people do their tax return in 2020 that will be the first time that they'll claim, because they'll be able to claim for the expenses starting with January 1.

So it's good news and I thank the minister for bringing it in, for listening to the voice of the many, many volunteers out there doing this work, and we'll be very happy to support the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. FINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. I certainly wish to, first and foremost, thank the Minister of Finance for acknowledging the fact that I did bring this idea forward with respect to providing a tax credit to our search and rescue volunteers, but I certainly cannot take all of the credit, that's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, we listen to our constituents across our districts and we listen to citizens from all across our province, and this was something that was brought to me. It's an idea that was brought to me by a gentleman by the name of Mr. Gerry Clark. I'd certainly be remiss not to acknowledge Mr. Gerry Clark.

Mr. Clark actually happened to be my grade 10 teacher at one point, and then again in grade 12 in my senior year of high school. He actually taught me the first aid and safety course. It's an interesting story behind that and my work with Mr. Clark throughout that program. I guess at that time I had taken a search and rescue and various safety courses: backpacking, mapping, using compass, the ability to stay in the woods overnight, a number of things, and in particular first aid, I had taken on a number of occasions. So by the time I got to his grade 12 class, I wasn't entirely interested in continuing with the first aid course.

I'll make a bit of a long story short, but it is quite comical. Mr. Gerry Clark who is the head of the Stephenville-Kippens-Port au Port Search and Rescue group, he and I certainly chuckle over this. Entering my grade 12 year, I had already accumulated a number of what I had thought to be extracurricular credits towards completing my high school diploma.

In the beginning of my senior year of high school, the principal at the time and the vice-principal had called me down to the office. They said: John, if you do not enrol in this first aid course with Mr. Clark, unfortunately, you will not have enough credits to graduate high school. I said I wasn't aware that was the case. I thought I had all of these extra credits and I did some extracurricular activities and there was an after school band program and so on so forth. They said: No, John, if you do not take Mr. Clark's first aid course you will not graduate high school.

Now, in my senior year of high school, once you had reached so many credits and all of your course opportunities were taken, you could have what we called free periods or free slots. There would be some days of the week, Mr. Speaker, where I would only go to high school for an hour in the morning. I'd be off for two hours and then I'd go back for an hour or two in the afternoon. I had the most free slots in the school, and it was because I had taken a lot of these extra courses; however, they said you cannot not have this extra free slot or free period, you're required to take this course with Mr. Clark. In doing so, as I said, I was quite frustrated. I had completed first aid on a number of occasions.

Mr. Clark had taught me since grade 10. I did complete the bronze, silver and gold Duke of Edinburgh Award program, which had me at the age of 14 doing everything from map and compass to hiking from Corner Brook to Stephenville on a three-night, four-day expedition, kayaking and horseback riding, hiking all over Gros Morne, you name it, Mr. Speaker. So being out in the woods and out in the forest was something I was accustomed to. So I did not want to take this first aid and safety course again.

What I did, Mr. Speaker – which I have no trouble admitting now, it was a probably a little tough to admit a number of years ago – I skipped most of Mr. Clark's classes. In fact, I actually skipped – and he'll acknowledge this, and this is why this is quite funny today. He's extremely proud this was brought forth and that I was in a position to do so.

I skipped so many of his classes that it got to the point come June of my graduating year of high school, they said: John, if you do not complete this next necessary assignment, you need to achieve a 70-plus or otherwise you will actually receive a failing grade in this course as a result of your non-attendance, losing marks for attendance. Ultimately, this will mean you will not graduate high school.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I did everything I could to complete this last assignment. I did pass. On my transcript I believe you will see that I received a 51 per cent in my first aid and safety course. The 51 per cent, as I mentioned, was not a reflection of what I was aware of, it was more

a reflection of the fact that I did not wish to go to this particular class.

The irony of this story is – and I've actually told it at one or two graduations – when I did receive my transcript and diploma the principal and the vice-principal, I went down to see them. I actually graduated with three extra credits. They lied to me in essence. I guess lying is a tough word.

The reality was, and the lesson I learned from that was the principal and the vice-principal had informed me they did not want to see a student with any potential not working. They wanted to see me strive to do more. As a direct result of that, they essentially tricked me into thinking that I would not graduate unless I took Mr. Clark's first aid and safety course.

Mr. Clark and I have a great relationship. He continues to drop into my constituency office almost weekly to have a chat. I just share that story because it's quite comical. It certainly provided a nice lesson to me, but it gives me an opportunity to talk about Mr. Gerry Clark and some of the great work that he and the Stephenville-Kippens-Port au Port Search and Rescue group do.

Mr. Speaker, we have search and rescue organizations all across this province. I believe there are 25 organizations: we have eight in Labrador and 17 here on the Island. These groups represent some 25,000 hours of volunteer service. There are 1,000-plus members that volunteer with these 25 different organizations. Can you imagine, 25,000 hours of volunteer service. This is for both ground and inland search and rescue operations.

In 2017, they had 100 missions across Newfoundland and Labrador – 100 search and rescue missions that they were engaged in across this province. On the West Coast in particular – sometimes in our media, be it CBC evening news or NTV Evening News or the VOXM News, as we're all aware, there is a bit of an emphasis on the East Coast, the Avalon region. I'm not saying that to take away from any other areas or where they want to put their focus. Primarily, it's due to population and the amount of incidents and things that arise.



We always see on TV – particularly us at home on the West Coast. We always see on TV, the rovers are out for a search and rescue mission or the rovers were engaged in a search and rescue mission. Well, what I can tell you is the Stephenville-Kippens-Port au Port Search and Rescue group is quite a busy operation.

Mr. Speaker, on the West Coast, just north of Point au Mal on the Port au Port Peninsula, we have a Cabox, what's referred to as the Roof of the Newf. The highest elevation in Newfoundland is in the Lewis Hills, which is between Point au Mal and it moves north towards the Bay of Islands. This particular area, being the highest elevation in Newfoundland and Labrador, despite what others sometimes think would be Gros Morne. This particular area presents some extreme challenges. In the summertime we have individuals that go hiking through this region and they may get lost or disoriented.

I actually had a really good friend of mine that I grew up with, and his self and fiancé at the time had taken off – this was just two summers ago – and they embarked on a day hike. They had their backpacks and they had a bottle of water and a few snacks. They embarked on this day hike. When they got to the top of the Lewis Hills the fog started to come down, the ceiling started to drop and within less than an hour they did not know where they were. They were completely lost.

As the evening hours wore on there was some great concern as to where they were. It's the folks from the Stephenville-Kippens-Port au Port Search and Rescue group that immediately left their depot – a lot of these members are on call 24-7, they have their cellphones and they have their CBs – and they took off. It took until early the next morning, but through that search, God bless, that they did in fact find my good friend and his fiancé. It's one example that has stuck out to me, again given the proximity and closeness of myself and my friend. That's just one of the many examples of some of the missions they do.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that's not a summer day hike. The other interesting part about the Lewis Hills being the highest elevation in Newfoundland and Labrador, is we have

snowmobilers – as you would, Mr. Speaker, in Labrador – all winter long. You can snowmobile in the Lewis Hills from December until probably presently. You would have to drive in a little ways now with truck and trailer, but you can still snowmobile on the West Coast in the mountains.

Individuals get lost, accidents happen. It's these types of volunteer groups, these research and rescue groups, that we rely on to find us when danger arises. We hope we never have to rely on them, but in fact if they were not there, we would not be so fortunate enough to have them.

So, Mr. Speaker, this particular tax credit is something that was brought up, as I said, to me from my teacher Mr. Gerry Clark who I mentioned a moment ago, from he and his members. I also understand as the Member mentioned from Ferryland, as did the Minister of Finance, it's something that volunteer search and rescue groups in this province have been asking for, for quite some time. It was new to me when it was brought forth, and I understand I have to give credit as well to the former –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please.

**MR. FINN:** – minister of Finance who did come out and visit the Stephenville - Port au Port District. The Minister of Justice actually spent some time with me in Stephenville, took a tour of the facility and got to meet and speak with some of our first-hand volunteers, including Mr. Clarke.

One thing I can tell you, organization is something that they are very strong on. There is not a single search and rescue mission that they have completed over a 25-year period that is not documented to the T. They have the maps drawn, everything has been archived and they draw upon these historical searches – these practical, actual searches that took place – for their practical learning experiences moving forward. It's certainly remarkable to see the dedication and organization and the way in which they train their volunteers.

What's actually important as well, Mr. Speaker, is that these search and rescue groups, they train with one another. And this is something that we

see in a number of different areas in our province where different volunteer groups partner and get together. But the Stephenville-Kippens-Port au Port search and rescue group often partners with the Barachois search and rescue group, which is representative for the Member of St. George's - Humber. They partner with their group out of the Bay of Islands as well, and they do all types of training, be it rescuing from waterways, from boats overturned, the ice-free rescues, just certainly a tremendous amount of work. And this is just in their training.

Mr. Speaker, they're also good community citizens as well. There is not a community event that I can recall that has happened in the Stephenville - Port au Port area where the search and rescue volunteers are not present. They often take care of things like crowd control, Mr. Speaker. The West Coast Senior Hockey League is up in operation now and we have sometimes upwards to 1,000 or 1,100 citizens in attendance, and the search and rescue volunteers are there for crowd control. They're also there as first responders in case there might be any incidents with either players on the ice or citizens in the arena. Then they also take care of the parking and folks that are leaving to ensure there's a smooth flow of parking.

They show up to our Canada Day activities, our municipal awareness days. The amount of activities that they show up to just to provide and lend their support is astonishing. What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is the people who look up to these volunteers the most is the children. And to see some of these big trucks come in with the ladders and their command posts and their command centres and they take the children in and they show them all around, and they show them the sirens and they show them how to use the CB radios, it's so interesting and the children are so intrigued. So it's something that (a) they're providing community service and (b) they're encouraging our youth and our young people to look up to them.

They also have a Hug-A-Tree program, is what it's called. A nice program for our children. It's a way that our search and rescue volunteers actually show our children and teach them methods of finding their way out, and/or staying put and learning techniques involved when lost

in the woods. It's a very great program they provide to our children and our youth.

Mr. Speaker, I just stand to kind of highlight some of the things that the search and rescue groups have done. I'm extremely proud, certainly very passionate about the work they do. To see that our volunteer firefighters have been receiving this type of credit for years and as we know our rural communities, in particular, depend on our volunteer firefighting services. So to see that our volunteer firefighter groups have been receiving this tax credit for a number of years, it was only fitting that we were able to bring it in for our search and rescue volunteers as well.

So from now forward, Mr. Speaker, as the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi mentioned, this will take effect in 2019. Essentially, what takes effect is that if a member of a search and rescue volunteer group has logged either service hours or training hours up to a 200-hour level, they will qualify for up to a maximum of a \$3,000 non-refundable tax credit on their provincial income tax.

It's noteworthy again that it does begin in 2019, and this is primarily because we are already in the tax year of 2018 so it was not entirely feasible to backtrack. We have tax tables that we have to adhere to and methods in which we file our provincial income tax.

So it's a small gesture in some regard, but to these 1,000-plus volunteers across Newfoundland and Labrador, this is something that is not a small gesture at all. They do spend a significant amount of their money for various uniforms, various pieces of equipment that they may require. While these organizations do their own fundraising, and they do seek great municipal support as well, this is something that will allow them a bit of relief when it comes to the end of the year, and it's a bit of a reward and a bit of a thank you to recognize that we see the value in the service they provide across our province.

Mr. Speaker, I won't take much longer, as I understand some of the Members have alluded to it, I just felt it would be interesting to share a little story about a teacher of mine who has had

a great impact on my life and someone who I'm very close to.

In addition to the minister recognizing that I had the opportunity to bring this forward, it was certainly Mr. Gerry Clark who had brought it forward to me. I would also be remiss not to thank the minister's staff, in particular, his deputy minister, Ms. Denise Hanrahan and also one of his directors, Mr. Jay Griffin, who I actually started communicating with this on I believe last May, if you will, maybe last April, and we started conversations on it then.

So certainly a huge thank you to the minister and his staff for bringing this opportunity to a reality, and a sincere thank you to Mr. Gerry Clark, the Stephenville - Port au Port search and rescue, as well as all of the search and rescue organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just take a few minutes to echo, again, some of the key points that my colleagues here have said, and particularly to my colleague from the District of Ferryland. I'll start by saying we on this side here, the Official Opposition, will wholeheartedly be supporting this. We see it as a good piece of legislation, and we see it as serving a key component to our society and acknowledging the key work that a group of people do here to service the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will start by saying I'm confident that no first responder, particularly those in search and rescue or volunteer firefighters, go in to provide that service based on a principle that they'll get a tax break down the road. They don't do that. But adding an incentive here, and having agencies that lobby for that, just shows the real support that we have for the service that's being provided here. And it was acknowledged, too, by my other colleagues here at the end of the day – and people may not know this – there is a cost related to this by those volunteers. They

lose out-of-pocket wear and tear on vehicles, other courses that they'll pay for out of their own pocket to be part of to upgrade their skill set.

They'll also, in certain cases, be part of a fundraising event where they pay or spend part of the money or donate things to be able to provide an ability to raise money to provide an ability to buy equipment that enhances not only their ability, but provides a better service for people.

I had the privilege of being one of these first responders in a different world and can really understand the value of the service that's being provided, but particularly the fact that the general public appreciates that and acknowledge that. You know at any time when you select a particular group and give them a break over other groups in society, particularly around taxes, you get a backlash. One thing you won't get in Newfoundland and Labrador is a backlash for those volunteer first responders because people see the value. They see the necessity. They see what it does to keep people safe, what it does to give people peace of mind, and what it does to ensure that every region of our province has access to safe services by professionals who are well trained and are committed to their service there.

So adding this here – I can remember a few years ago when the firefighters licence plate came into being as an acknowledgement because in most cases, first responders – in those cases there, the firefighters – had to respond quickly, particularly in small areas as firefighters. They would with due diligence but would have to probably exceed the speed limit, or they would probably have to take routes that may not have been following all the pure legalities of the law or the Traffic Act. Police officers and that could identify these people were doing it to respond to an emergency as part of that.

That was the first step in us really recognizing – I say us as a society. Here's a group of volunteers that we have to provide every service incentive so that they can go do their job. What we're doing here, the incentive we're providing is not money in their pockets, because I know where their money is going in any little tax break they'll get down the road. But they're

putting that back into upgrading their own skill set, how they go towards fundraising for pieces of equipment or how they themselves ensure that they are better equipped to be able to respond quickly.

I go back to the point about bringing in an incentive for a particular group when you know it's good because there's no backlash. I'll just tell a little quick story. Twenty years ago in a former life I had to respond to one of these situations. It was in a snowstorm. I was off the main road in a subdivision in the town, Goulds at the time, before it was part of the city. I couldn't get out in the snowstorm, got halfway out, almost in part of the middle of the road. The back of my driveway you couldn't get out to get to the main thing. We had radios in those days. It wasn't cellphones. I radioed ahead to one of the other people who had a four-wheel drive. I walked to the main road, got picked up there. We went and responded to the circumstance.

I came back the next morning and had to get a plow to come in to plow me out so I could get out. As the person came while we were doing the plowing, he basically said what idiot, really, would come out in a blizzard snowstorm at 3 o'clock in the morning – I said 3 o'clock in the morning – to try to get out to go. The car was parked there and I think it was going to be \$15 for him to plow it out. I told him I was a volunteer firefighter and that we had a fire at a house. He stopped. He did all the plowing, put it away. I went to pay him and he said: No, that's on me. He said that's because he respected what first responders do and the impact they had.

I appreciated that, but it gave me a real understanding that everybody understands and appreciates what other people do in our society. The things we need to do and the incentives are not there about monetary gain, but we need to make it so less intrusive for them financially that there would be a benefit.

I'll tell another little quick story about a young man. I had some businesses at the time and this young gentleman, who had become a volunteer firefighter also, was the manager of one of my businesses. He was offered another job paying more in another part of the city which would have restricted him from being able to respond, particularly, daytime was the big issue, in the

Goulds at the time. They didn't have so many volunteer firefighters. There was no paid staff at the time.

Those other members of the department, who worked in the city or other areas, couldn't respond in our normal three-to-seven-minute response time. He was offered a job in the city, turned it down because he did not want to not be able to fulfil his duty and protect his home community. So there's a testament to a gentleman like that.

Fortunate enough, two years ago the Paradise fire department, the new building was opened. I got the privilege to go with the Member then; the two of us are Members, myself and the former leader of the Opposition. We sat, and as all the dignitaries of the city, the mayor of the city, the mayor of Mount Pearl, because it's a regional fire department now as part of the process, got to unveil that and introduce the captain for that fire department. It was that young man who had been a volunteer firefighter, who had gone on to become a professional firefighter and was now the captain for that particular fire department.

So there's a connection there between the volunteer, what they do and the service they provide. Their expectation, and all their expectation is nothing, is that they can provide the service to the best of their ability.

We have an ability to improve how they do that by giving some incentives, by being able to restrict, take away some of the barriers that may be in place, but also just acknowledging the great work they do and how it's appreciated. This piece of legislation, with this change to that, does that, but it also recognizes the other part.

Sometimes we take into account that volunteer firefighters and search and rescue are one in the same. In principle, their value is one in the same – don't get me wrong, without a doubt – but people not realizing they're two distinctive organizations here.

One being identified was important, and I think was a great first step. It has done yeoman service to be able to still encourage people to stay there. It's a little bit of incentive for them to be able to

take the little bit of a tax break and put it back into whatever it is they may do.

I had one firefighter who had said to me at one point, the tax incentive they get at the end of it, he takes his family out as a little reward for them being able to put up with him gone to training, sometimes twice a week, depending on how many responses they have to respond to.

Also, putting in search and rescue volunteers is key because, again, as was noted here by my colleagues, search and rescue volunteers, at a moment's notice, could be called away to go to whatever particular area they're in to do a particular search, not knowing what the outcome is going to be. They respond not knowing exactly what it is they're going to face at the beginning until they're there and the briefing is done and they set up their response.

In a lot of cases some of these are taking their own equipment. I've had guys who've taken their own flashlights, their own radios; they're using their cellphones and this type of thing. They do that without a moment's notice of thinking about that, without a whim about what impact this is going to have, am I out of my zone for minutes on my telephone. That's not in any way, shape or form an indication of them even worrying about that. They do it because of the service they're providing and the benefit it is to everybody here.

So it's good to see that this is accepted here, it'll be accepted as part of the federal tax credit. The fact that the year down the road before it kicks in gives an opportunity to those agencies – the umbrella agencies that oversee particularly the first responders who are volunteers – an opportunity to educate their members on how they can apply for this tax credit.

Everybody in principle is entitled, just some will benefit a little bit more because of the determination on their taxes they pay in, and where they fit within the tax regime. The fact we're acknowledging as a society that we value the work they're doing, and we know they're not doing it for any remuneration, but we're saying here's an ability for you to get a little bit of a return on your own investment, knowing that you invest 20 times what we do here.

There is one little caveat, too, that I've known, because we all get caught up in our own lives as first responders, that sometimes you make a decision: I don't know if I'm going to be able to get to training tonight because I've got this, and I could make it if I worked around it. The little incentive of the 200 hours, that might be enough, particularly people who are saying, I've got a softball game tomorrow night but you know what? I want to get to my 200 hours because I want that tax credit because I can buy a new piece of equipment or I can do something with my family as a reward for them supporting me as a volunteer.

So, there's an incentive there along the way for those who are close, to be able to say you know what, I'm going to make an extra effort there because at the end of the day I can get an incentive that's going to help me even do my volunteer work better, and also be able to, if I want, reward those people who are going out of their way to support me.

Again, I just want to acknowledge that I think there's a great piece of legislation here. We will wholeheartedly be supporting this and say congratulations to all first responders, but particularly those now in the search and rescue volunteer sector for the great work they've been doing and continue to do, here's a little incentive to say thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a couple of minutes to have a few words on this bill. I think it's a very important piece of legislation, a very important initiative coming from the budget.

Before I get into my comments, I just want to say I'm a bit dismayed by the revelation from the Member next to me there. I thought if anything ever happened to me in terms of first aid and safety, I would be safe because he was there. But 51 per cent in that course, that's just not good enough. I don't know. I talked to some other Members around, too. They're a bit shaken by the fact that his qualifications aren't what we

thought they were. Now, despite that fact, he was an honours student, Mr. Speaker. We're a bit shaken here this morning by that revelation.

I just want to say a few words about the search and rescue tax credit. As well as the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, I also visited the Stephenville-Kippens-Port au Port Search and Rescue centre in Stephenville and talked to Mr. Gerry Clark. He's certainly someone who believes in what he does.

I had an opportunity to look at the equipment they have there and to review some of the training programs they have. I looked at some of the things they do and discussed with him some of the operations that they've been involved in and how they work with the RCMP and other first responders to emergency situations where they've been called in.

Also, the Bay of Islands search and rescue, which serves the northern part of my district and the Barachois Search and Rescue, which serves the Bay St. George South and that area of my district. I've seen their equipment and had an opportunity to talk with some of their members about the work they do.

I'm very supportive of these changes in the piece of legislation. I want to – as well as the Minister of Finance did – make sure that the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port gets credit for what he's done here in bringing this forward to the bureaucracy to the minister and pushing this issue forward and seeing it through to reality, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see this.

I also want to say that I was very impressed last week, I think it was, to hear the Member for Torngat Mountains talk about his own experience as someone who's been involved in search and rescue in his area. To talk not only about the sacrifice that it takes, the time and the dedication, but also the emotional involvement in being involved in a search and rescue operation. I'm very impressed with his comments on that last week I must say, Mr. Speaker. It gave me some insight into the work that search and rescue people do and the importance of the service they provide in this province.

I just wanted to express my support for these changes and to say I will be supporting this piece of legislation.

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 not going to take very long. I did want to, for the record, just to endorse Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. I'm not going to repeat all that's been said, but basically we all understand the great work of our volunteer firefighters in our province and certainly, in addition to that, which this bill addresses, the great work of our volunteer search and rescue personnel. They don't do it for any remuneration. They do it because they want to help their community, they want to help citizens, they want to do the right thing, as all volunteers do.

I think that when we look at things like volunteer firefighting, like search and rescue it goes beyond what one could expect as, I'll say, normal volunteer work because they're actually providing a critical service, something that we absolutely need, a life-saving service. If they weren't stepping up to the plate to do it then government really would have no choice but to have to fund this. This is not something that we could possibly do without. It's not a nice-to-have; it's a must-have. It's an essential service that they're providing.

To be able to do something to recognize that in the form of a tax break, I think that's a good way to acknowledge the very important work that they do, offer a little bit of an incentive and, as I said, it's the right thing to do.

I will be supporting the bill. Kudos to the government for bringing this forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** If the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank each of the Members of the Legislature today for speaking to this bill. It is an important bill. I understand the Speaker himself was actually a member of the Goose Bay search and rescue. As in Goose Bay, other areas of the province as well where we have volunteer firefighters that don't meet the 200-hour threshold, this will actually assist some of those volunteer members if they're also volunteering on search and rescue.

The Member for Ferryland raised a question when he spoke about how many volunteer firefighters. I'm seeking that information and will get that to you.

For certain, there are volunteer firefighters throughout the province that don't meet the 200-hour threshold and are also search and rescue volunteers and, when we combine the two of them, will reach the 200 hours that are required. So this will not only assist search and rescue individuals, it will also assist some of the volunteer firefighters to reach that 200-hour threshold as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted with the level of support throughout the Legislature for this amendment to the legislation as it will help a number of volunteers throughout the province who give such valuable time back to the province and to the people of the province through search and rescue.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 8 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.'

The motion is carried.

**CLERK (Murphy):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 8)

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

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

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 8)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I moved, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 7.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the –

**MS. COADY:** Sorry, Bill 8.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Bill 8.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

**Committee of the Whole**

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 8)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When I spoke in second reading, I did propose a couple of questions in regard to usage and the uptake on the current volunteer fire brigades. The minister did indicate when he closed debate that now, cumulatively, with the search and rescue one in reaching those 200 hours it probably would reach a number of people. But he did indicate that he would get those numbers in terms of what's been accessed now currently with volunteer firefighters.

I appreciate that. We look forward to seeing that information when he has it available.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 7 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?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.



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

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Deputy House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 8.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 8.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**MR. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 8 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 8 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

**MS. COADY:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Order 5, second reading of Bill 7.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before, I move and second this bill, just to provide an update to the Member for Ferryland on Bill 8. I do have the information now. Approximately 5,000 volunteer firefighters availed of the tax credit in 2016. We don't have the 2017 numbers yet. There are about 1,000 search and rescue volunteers. So based on both firefighters and search and rescue, there may be some additional firefighters that would qualify based on the combining of ours as well.

I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I know I am supposed to be moved and seconding Bill 7, but I wanted to give that update.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We're all about efficiency.

**MR. OSBORNE:** I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 7 entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 7)

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments in the *Revenue Administration Act* relate to the health and post-secondary education tax; otherwise more commonly referred to as the payroll tax. Mr. Speaker, this is a routine amendment and in this year's budget, we did give a tax break to a number of businesses in the province by increasing the

threshold on the provincial payroll tax or HAPSET from \$1.2 million to \$1.3 million. So essentially, what that means is that anybody who was paying less than \$1.2 million in payroll didn't have to pay payroll tax.

We've increased the threshold to \$1.3 million, so anybody paying less than \$1.3 million in payroll now does not have to pay the payroll tax. Anybody who was between the \$1.2 million and \$1.3 million will be a savings of somewhere upwards to \$2,000 less tax that they would have to pay. Anybody with payroll above \$1.3 million will save \$2,000 in payroll or the tax on the HAPSET.

There are 50 additional businesses that won't have to pay any payroll tax as a result of this amendment and there is another, I think, 1,200 businesses throughout the province that will get a \$2,000 tax break or upwards to a \$2,000 tax break.

So 75 per cent of the private sector employment in this province is by small business. This is something, in consultation with the Board of Trade – the Board of Trade had asked me to look at the other Members of our caucus who had received feedback from the Board of Trade or from small businesses in their districts; had asked for this amendment. We'd, obviously, like to see it higher.

What I've committed to and the Premier and our government has committed to, Mr. Speaker, is that this is the first step. As we're able to see that the province is on a more sound fiscal footing, we'll see further changes to the payroll tax as well as other taxes. We're committed to ensuring that we provide benefit to small businesses in this province where we can do that.

One of the other benefits that we've provided in this year's budget – which will help not only every citizen in the province who owns a vehicle but will also help businesses – are the changes to the automobile insurance. That change this year will benefit small businesses as well and make it a little bit less expensive compared to last year and the previous year on the insurance. It's not only the payroll tax that will help small businesses this year; it is also the changes to the insurance, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the number of people that are employed in small businesses in this province, as I said, roughly 75 per cent of private enterprise employment is by small business. They are the backbone of the provincial economy and they employ a number of people. Whether it's a convenience store, Mr. Speaker, or a small retail shop or a small engineering firm, whatever the case may be, small business makes up the vast majority of private sector employment throughout the province.

In consultation with the St. John's Board of Trade, with chambers of commerce throughout the province, we've made this change. There are a number of other changes that we've made in this year's budget that will provide some benefit to businesses as well, Mr. Speaker. Part of it is changes that we're looking at making for private pension that small businesses have put in place and making those changes. That was another recommendation brought to us by the Board of Trade, as was the automobile insurance.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to making it easier for small business to operate in this province. As we get our fiscal situation under control and continue towards surplus in 2022-23, we'll continue to look at ways that we can not only make it easier on small business but on people living in the province, and ease the tax burden on people living in the province as well.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other initiatives we've done in this year's budget that focus on small business in the province is the five-year, \$37 million Canadian Agricultural Partnership, \$14.8 million funding through the province. A number of our farmers throughout the province are in fact small businesses, but the employment they provide and the produce they provide, the food sustainability is important to this province.

Part of what we're looking at with that program, Mr. Speaker, the agricultural program, is increasing the number of farms in the province and increasing the amount of produce produced in the province to not only increase our food sustainability, it'll create employment and get us back to – in the 1930s, 100 per cent of the vegetables consumed in the province were produced in the province. It's now at about 10 per cent.

You look at the \$10 million Atlantic Fisheries Fund and what that will leverage for small business enterprise in this province. So we're proud of what we've been able to do there and the partnership with the federal government.

You look at the investment in tourism that is in this year's budget. The number of employees that many small businesses throughout the province provide to people in the province, the employees. It's 20,000 people employed now in the tourism sector in this province and that is significant.

We're looking at \$600,000 invested in four regional Destination Management Organizations to continue to help the tourism industry and to grow the tourism industry and employ more people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we increased the funding to the film and television industry from \$2 million to \$4 million. We have \$4 million invested in this year's budget again. When you look at the fact that last year or the year before last, it was a \$40 million industry in this province. This year, it grew from \$40 million to \$50 million in the last fiscal year in this province, employing 640 people. That is actually quite significant; 640 people in film and television in this province.

It's an area where we're focused on continuing to grow that. Another example of small business in the province but a large number of employees. Many people in the province would be quite surprised to know that there are 640 people employed in film and television in this province.

Mr. Speaker, a key element of growing a strong and diversified economy is the \$35 million that we've allocated in this year's budget to support economic development, research and development and investment attraction. That's another area where we're focused on trying to grow small business, diversify the economy and create employment in this province.

While oil and gas is very important – and I will not understate the importance of that industry if you look at *Advance 2030*, Mr. Speaker, and what we're doing there – we also need to focus on diversifying the economy. While oil and gas revenues increase and we continue to grow the

oil and gas industry in the province and the number of employees, if we can get back to the levels of production and the level of royalties from the oil and gas industry, we can look at putting that into a legacy fund. We can look at paying down the province's debt with that – because we've diversified the economy, because we've given opportunity for the aquaculture industry to double the number of employees, Mr. Speaker, which is what we're focused on. We're already seeing the benefits of that.

You look at the agriculture industry and the potential that the agriculture industry has. If you look at the technology sector, Mr. Speaker, that's growing by leaps and bounds. In fact, every person who graduates in this province from IT courses is quickly gobbled up by the IT sector. We need to look at ways of increasing the number of students that are going through IT programs in this province. That industry is growing in this province and now employs 4,000 people in IT.

It doesn't matter where you are in the world. You can be in St. John's, Newfoundland, you can be in London, you can be in Toronto and you can be in New York. You can operate an IT industry just as easily in St. John's as you can in New York City. We're focused on growing that sector of the economy, Mr. Speaker.

Those are the things we've done through *The Way Forward* to diversify the economy, to strengthen the economy and to employ more people so that as oil and gas and our strategy on 2030 continues to grow and 7,500 people over the next 12 years – 7,500 additional people in the oil and gas industry. We're also looking at creating employment opportunities within small business in this province. We're focused on that and we will do what we can. The payroll tax is one example of what we're doing to try to make it easier for small businesses in this province to employ more people and to succeed.

You look at the Cabinet Committee on Jobs and *The Way Forward*, which is primarily driven by the Premier, Mr. Speaker, he is absolutely dedicated to diversifying the economy and finding opportunities in this province to ensure that our economy is strong in all regions of the province. We're focused on a number of sectors throughout the province so that all regions of the

province benefit from the diversification of the economy and creating other employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, you look at the federal government's Ocean Supercluster initiative. This province's Premier went to work and focused heavily on attracting that to Atlantic Canada and we did. Newfoundland and Labrador will be the primary beneficiary of the Ocean Supercluster. The technology sector, the IT sector, will benefit as a result of the Ocean Supercluster sector brought to this province and the Atlantic region.

Again, we will be the primary beneficiary of that in this province. It's because of the work of our Premier and the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, Mr. Speaker, in attracting that Supercluster to this area. There will be more than 165 businesses in our advanced technology sector that will benefit from that. Right now, that sector generates \$1.6 billion in annual revenue in this province. That will continue to grow, largely in part because of the Ocean Supercluster and the benefits that will bring, but in large part because of our focus on the technology sector and the opportunities that can bring to our province.

Mr. Speaker, you look at the fish and seafood production in this province, it's exceeded \$1.3 billion in the last fiscal year. I believe that's the second year in a row that it's exceeded \$1.3 billion – that's the third year, sorry, that it's exceeded \$1 billion; it's up to \$1.3 billion last year. That industry employs 16,000 people in over 400 communities in our province.

That's an area, a traditional industry, that goes back over 500 years in our province, but it's an industry that, to a certain degree, we've lost focus on. We need to refocus on that industry and the employment that it brings, especially to smaller rural communities in our province. It's the very reason for our existence in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was founded on the fishery. Our government has been focused on growing that industry and creating additional benefits through that industry.

Mr. Speaker, you look at our infrastructure plan; \$3 billion over five years. That's 4,900 full-time jobs annually as a result of the infrastructure program in this province. That's one of the ways our province has turned the corner, continues to

turn the corner compared to what we saw in the province in December of 2015 or January of 2016. These things are happening. They've been happening throughout the province. People are starting to see a greater sense of optimism than they did in 2016. It's primarily because of the focus on diversifying the economy and creating the benefits as a result of that.

You look at the work that we've done with Husky Energy; \$3 billion economic benefit to the province over the life of the project and 5,000 person years of employment as a result. That was primarily the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources working with Husky Energy to bring that project to reality in this province. You look at the money invested in PAL Aerospace. One hundred and fifty jobs already created as a result of an agreement that our province government has reached with PAL Aerospace and the investment that our government has made in that sector.

Aerospace is an area that our province should be focused on more heavily, and we are. That's an area that we're looking at, Mr. Speaker, to expand. We have companies in this province that are world leaders in aerospace that are working globally right here from Newfoundland and Labrador. It's an area that I believe our province can expand, that we can grow and we can strengthen that sector here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we will.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at Canada Fluorspar. Again, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Premier, the work they've done in that area; 3,000 person years of employment and another 525 spinoff jobs as a result of that. It is the dedication and hard work looking at areas throughout the province where we can create opportunity for small business and we can grow the economy. That's what we've been focused on.

I said on budget day in this province that this province has a promising future. We're dedicated, as a government, Mr. Speaker, of making it a more prosperous province and we're starting to see the results of that work that this government has put into doing it.

We'll continue to see the results, Mr. Speaker. It's like a large luxury liner. You don't turn it

quickly, it turns very slowly. If you've ever seen a cruise ship in St. John's Harbour turning around, it takes a long time to turn that around, but we're starting to see the turnaround in this province. The province is in much better shape today than it was two years ago. We're starting to see the benefits and the results of the work that has been started by this government and we continue to focus on it.

Mr. Speaker, we take economic activity and supporting small business very seriously in this province. The changes that we've made to the payroll tax are a significant first step in reducing the payroll tax even further. The 50 businesses that no longer have to pay payroll tax as a result and the 1,200 businesses that will pay \$2,000 less this year than they paid last year, while that's a small amount – one would say \$2,000 less in payroll tax – it is actually significant. Because it's the commitment that we're making to small businesses and the fact that we are committing that as we become more fiscally sound in this province, we'll see further reductions to the payroll tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy with and proud of the amendment that we're making here and how it will help small businesses in our province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly pleased this morning to rise to speak to Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. This deals with, specifically, payroll tax as it relates to small business. Small businesses are a huge part of our free economy when you look at all aspects of it. Well into the mid-90 per cent of business activity is classified as small business.

This deals with providing an exemption to those small businesses in regard to a payroll tax and being exempt from paying this tax. Anytime, from a business perspective, you're given an exemption, it allows that business to operate more efficiently to look at free investment in

their activities they carry out, or sale of goods and services. It certainly looks at remuneration that's being provided to their staff. It opens up a whole array of options with this tax and others in regard to leaving more money for the small business leaders in companies to make decisions related to how they operate their company.

I know back in our time, in our administration, I think originally this was about \$500,000. I think incrementally over the years in various budgets, this was increased and to allow these small businesses to be exempt from this tax. Again, this year, in *Budget 2018*, the current government has moved the tax exemption as well to \$1.2 million.

Now, specifically, based on, I guess, companies and what they paid in the past, there are, I think, approximately 50 additional companies will be exempt from paying the tax. What's remaining out of those that pay the tax, 1,200 I believe is what the number is, will pay up to \$2,000 less in tax each year.

So the minister talked about economic development, he talked about diversification, he talked about Husky, he talked about tourism and small business and various other aspects of the economy. So all of that collectively is tied into driving activity, driving employment, driving investment, allowing business to expand, allow new business to be created and that's all about economic activity, new wealth and employing people, sustaining communities and regions. It's all interrelated and this is just one component, an important component, but it is necessary in regard to that incentive.

Now, the minister talked about *The Way Forward* plan, he talked about the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, I think he may have alluded to some indicators in the economy. Some of the things we've seen over the past couple of years with some of the challenges, we haven't seen a lot of those in the right direction. It has to be comprehensive in terms of how we deal with that environment and make that environment conducive to people who want to live here from a personal income tax point of view and also from an income tax point of view, from a corporate tax point of view and things like small business. So it has to be comprehensive, it has to be to an environment that invites people to want

to stay here, have their families grow up here and have new people to come into the employment realm.

We talked about the public service, talked about – I think there's a number like 5,000 people who are coming out of the public service over the next number of years. So how do we adapt to that? How do we make that through taxation and through programs that we have, governments have? How do you incentivize people to want to live here and be part of our region going forward or province? It's important.

You look at things like our demographics in terms of our population and the rate of aging that causes concern. It's all tied back to that environment and things like this and payroll tax and what that environment is like and how it allows investment and supports it and drives it. Then, at the end of the day, makes sure our economy is functioning and functioning well and doing what it needs to do.

There's not a lot further I'm going to say on this bill, Mr. Speaker. It is in the right direction. Government needs to do more of this. We hear a lot of terms like the way forward, committee on jobs, all of these other things. We're doing this and doing that, but the indicators to date doesn't show that we're getting the return we need to get.

In a small way, this is a step in the right direction. It is going to help, and I'd certainly encourage you to do much more of this and be far more definitive in terms of the direction we're taking and how we're getting there. I think that will be to the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, not for this generation but the next generation to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Yes, I'm happy to have the opportunity to also stand and speak to Bill 7, the amendment to the *Revenue Administration Act*. An important bill because, as the minister has pointed out, and

also the Member for Ferryland, by changing the exemption threshold for the payroll tax to \$1,300,000 from \$1,200,000, we are doing something that's really important for small business. There's no doubt about that.

We're a small province and so when we say that we now will have 50 more small businesses who do not have to pay that payroll tax, I think that's important, and the fact that there will be over 1,200 who will be saving \$2,000, that's important too. Two thousand is not a large amount but I suppose every bit helps. If it were an individual who got the \$2,000 break, I think that would be very, very significant, but even for a small business, \$2,000 less I'm sure is helpful.

I'm glad about this. It's an important thing to do. I agree with the minister in that, but I think it points to the need that we have to look at our taxation system. I think this government has said that it wants to review our taxation system, but I see no signs that they're doing that. We can't just be doing things in piecemeal.

So while this is something that is going to help, I think we need to look at our whole taxation structure. We need to look at our income tax structure in particular. We need to look at the corporate tax. Is our corporate tax where it should be? I don't think so. I think we could have a higher corporate tax, getting at larger corporations. Not the small business but larger corporations. So we do need to look at where revenue can come in through our taxation system that isn't done on the backs of individuals.

So, for example, our consumer taxes have gone up under this government. We now have – in the revenue from taxation – 30 per cent of the revenue is coming from consumer tax. That's very problematic because that means that low-income individuals really get hit when consumer taxes go up or new consumer taxes are put in place, which has happened with this government.

So this government doesn't mind giving \$40 million –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Ask the Member to please continue.

Thank you.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That was helpful.

That this government continues to find major breaks for large corporations when it comes to subsidization.

We just had a perfect example with what's happened with Canopy Growth and the way in which this government is not afraid to put huge amounts of money into larger corporations.

So we really do need to look at the whole of our taxation system. This government has said they're going to review it. I don't see any signs of that happening. While I'm very happy with this move – really pleased with it and happy to support this bill – I think we have a larger issue when it comes to taxation revenue and who is paying what, who is carrying the brunt and who is this government really supporting.

It takes little steps like this supporting small business, I would say they do an awful lot more for the large corporate sector. I think this is something that does need to be reviewed, but I am supporting this bill and will be happy to vote for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I just want to just speak a couple of minutes on this bill. It's a very important bill. It's important to the small businesses in our province. It's a small change but it's a change. The minister said it will save \$2,000 to businesses that have revenues of \$1.3 million.

It's so important, you know, and I know the minister was speaking about the positive things, diversifying the economy and whatnot. Mr. Speaker I have the opportunity in a lot of cases every day to speak to small business owners in our province, and in my district alone there are a lot of people that are involved in the housing industry. With the economy the way it is right

now in Newfoundland and Labrador, housing starts are down. I know they are in my district and they're down overall.

A lot of small businesses are finding it very, very difficult. While we're making these small changes, people in general are being taxed so much because of this government across the way that they have less to spend. When people have less to spend the one people that are getting affected more so than large corporations – your Walmarts and different industries like that – are the small business, because people don't have the money to repair that roof, they don't have the money to do the renovations on their houses, they don't have the money to build new homes.

I'm seeing it in my district big time, that small businesses have been really affected by things like the levy which has taken money out of people's pockets. People are really finding the tax increases and the HST, tax increases to different business; people are really finding it difficult. The gas tax and different taxes that this government across the way has brought in, the big people they're really affecting are small businesses, and small business is hurting.

While people say over there on the other side – and they'll be complimentary, we're doing this, we're diversifying – they should talk to small business owners because I've talked to them in my district all the time. I've talked to construction people that are telling me they don't know if they're going to hire people this year because people are not building homes.

I've talked to a roofing company only this weekend and normally what they do, they're booked right solid, right on through the summer. It's a job to get them to do a job even until September. This year, once he gets to July, he said I don't know where the work is going to come from because housing starts are down so low.

What people are telling me is that the effects – and this is all to do with small businesses, and I'm sure it's in rural Newfoundland and it's in urban Newfoundland, we see it everywhere – that people are not spending money like they used to. People don't have the money that they had to spend. When that happens, people don't

spend money, the number one effect that has on people and business, are small business owners.

We can have all the big corporations we got, we can have the oil industry, we can have mining industry, but the heart and soul of Newfoundland and Labrador are small business. Small business is what's going to keep our economy going. It's going to keep rural Newfoundland going. It's your corner shop, it's your roofing companies, it's the people that are building houses, it's people that are – paving driveway company, if you look at paving companies and stuff like this. These taxes that that government across the way has introduced to people in this province have hurt our economy so much. One group in the economy that it has hurt more than anybody is small business.

I'm sure every Member across the way can talk about different companies they've been talking to and they're hurting. There are a lot of people in this province hurting. We got to do our best to make sure that small business survive. They're the key to all aspects of our society, whether it's rural or urban, and I think we could be doing a whole lot more. While you get up and say we're doing a little thing by increasing the threshold from \$1.2 million to \$1.3 million, you've done an awful lot to hurt small business in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I'm not going to take very long but I do want to, I guess for the record, express my views on this bill. I certainly support the bill wholeheartedly.

As has been said by, I think, all speakers, I think we all recognize the value of small business and the contribution they make to our economy, to our communities, whether it be through the provision of employment, payment of taxes and a lot of the social good that businesses do in our communities. It's important that we do what we can to support them. It's important that to do what we can to help them prosper, help them

grow and I really think this is a step in the right direction.

I have had conversations in the past and correspondence, emails and so on, as well as face to face and telephone calls with – one person who comes to mind is Vaughn Hammond with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. One of the things he has said on behalf of his members – and he has been quite clear – he said, cut out all these big grants and so on to businesses and just focus on things like reducing the payroll tax, eliminating the payroll tax and so on and put the focus there and let business survive and thrive on its own without big government handouts.

He has said that he would prefer that that would be the route we would go, and I tend to agree with him. Although, I understand there are some primary industries and so on – and certainly if you're into some of our more rural areas that are so dependent on particular operations to provide employment for the communities to survive, I understand there will be times when government may have to step in.

In general, when it comes to business, particularly big business, there have been times when I've questioned whether they really needed taxpayers' money in order to accomplish whatever it is they wanted to accomplish. I think they could've done it on their own without that, and we could've taken that money and put it into things like we're doing here today in terms of reducing, or eliminating for that matter, the payroll tax for small business and let them survive and thrive on their own.

With that said, this is a good move and I will be supporting it 100 per cent. Once again, two in a row, kudos to the government on another good move today.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** If the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you Mr. Speaker.



I thank all Members for their contribution to the debate here today. I will take exception to some of the comments made by the Member for Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, I will say here in this Legislature today that when the baton was passed from the former administration to this administration, one of the things we couldn't talk about at that time because the economy would've absolutely crashed. Now that administration knew it. That administration knew, Mr. Speaker, the situation fiscally that the province was in.

They didn't provide a mid-year update, which is traditional in this province, because they were heading into an election and they didn't want to tell the people of the province what a mess they made. They wouldn't provide a mid-year update. We called for a mid-year update. They told the people of the province there was a \$1.1 billion deficit – \$1.1 billion deficit. When we formed government in December of 2015 we found out it was \$2.7 billion. Almost three times what they said it was – \$2.7 billion deficit.

We were told, Mr. Speaker, within 48 hours of the new Premier taking office. So nobody can tell me they didn't know if it was that urgent that the Department of Finance officials had to inform the new Premier within 48 hours that if they didn't do an emergency release of Treasury bills the province wouldn't have been able to make payroll. Now nobody can tell me they didn't know that, but they wouldn't tell the public.

They'll stand over there and say, you shouldn't have raised taxes. You shouldn't have done this. You shouldn't have prevented the bond-rating agencies from putting the clamps on it, Mr. Speaker, because we would've loved to have been able to see that, is what they'll say.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. OSBORNE:** But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is the bond rating agencies very quickly told this province, the new government, that drastic measures had to be taken. Nobody in this province, nobody in this House – nobody on this side of the House – likes the tax measures that were put in place in 2016.

But if we didn't do it to eliminate the \$2.7-billion deficit that they figured they didn't have to tell the people of the province existed, or the fact that the province wouldn't have been able to make payroll – if we didn't address those issues immediately, the bond rating agencies would have stepped in and taken drastic action, Mr. Speaker. The lending agencies would have cut us off. There was a choice that had to be made. If it was a popularity contest, nobody would have put taxes in place, but we had to address a very real and very drastic situation.

Mr. Speaker, when I became Minister of Finance I committed to the people of this province that I was going to take a balanced approach and I believe I have.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. OSBORNE:** I believe I have, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. OSBORNE:** As the province becomes more fiscally comfortable, as we start to move closer toward surplus, we will reduce the financial burden, the tax burden on the people of the province. That has started, Mr. Speaker. We are reducing taxes as we can afford to do so.

We've brought it from a \$2.7-billion deficit that the people opposite left in place, Mr. Speaker, down to less than a billion dollars this year. We are headed in the right direction but we understand, and we understand from the bond rating agencies and from the lending agencies, that borrowing – now, I'm going to go back a step a second before I complete that sentence.

When we took office in December of 2015, just to service the deficit, Mr. Speaker, the province was borrowing on average \$4.38 million a day – a day. They didn't think that was appropriate to tell the people of the province. We've gotten that down to about \$2 million a day today.

The bond rating agencies and the lending agencies tell us it's still not sustainable, but it's much better than what they left the people of the province. Am I proud of the taxes that were put in place? Absolutely not, but I can tell you they were absolutely necessary, Mr. Speaker.

You look at the employment numbers that we have today, they're comparable to 2011. In 2011 this province was saying they were historically high. Are they as good as they were in 2015? No, but we had three megaprojects in 2015, Mr. Speaker. As we come off those megaprojects, we see a contraction in the employment numbers in this province. We see a contraction in the employment numbers in this province because of the fact that we're coming off those megaprojects.

The payroll tax announcement that we've made here, Mr. Speaker, will help small businesses. The measures that we've put in place to diversify the economy is putting the province back in the right direction. While the former government focused solely on the oil industry, they forgot the rest of the economy.

Things were going so well with the oil industry they just expected that would continue forever. They budgeted \$120 a barrel of oil, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't the reality. In their 2015 budget they budgeted that oil was going to continue to grow by \$8 a barrel per year. That, we know, didn't happen.

In their own Estimates book in 2015 they projected that employment numbers were going to decline and unemployment numbers were going to increase. Mr. Speaker, they also clouded those numbers by saying that Alderon was going to be our reality and Bay du Nord was going to be a reality. It was going to start in 2015. We were going to start seeing huge employment increases again in 2016 as a result of those two projects. But those things didn't happen.

They projected \$6.8 billion in capital investment as a result of those projects and 12,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. If you factor out the 12,000 jobs they were promising, and factor in the fact they were projecting employment numbers decreasing and unemployment numbers increasing – we're way ahead of what they projected if you factor in the 12,000 jobs.

Let's be honest, Mr. Speaker, when we say there was a very difficult reality this province had to deal with in December of 2016, in the budget of 2016, nobody wanted those tax measures but they were absolutely necessary. As we are able

to reduce taxes in this province, we will do it. We're going to do it by diversifying the economy, by making the economy stronger, by growing jobs in this province, by focusing on the economy, growing jobs and reducing taxes as we're able to do it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. OSBORNE:** I support this bill, Mr. Speaker, because it is good for small business.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 7 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against?

This motion is carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 7)

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

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

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 7)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 7.

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

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

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those against?

The motion is carried.

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

**Committee of the Whole**

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.” (Bill 7)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 2.

**CHAIR:** Clause 2.

Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 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?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

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

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 7.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 7.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise and report Bill 7 carried without amendment, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**MR. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 7 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 7 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

**MS. COADY:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**MS. COADY:** I call from Orders of the Day, Order 2, Committee of Supply.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee to review the Estimates of Supply.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering the Estimates of the Legislature.

**CLERK:** Subhead 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Subhead 1.1.01.

Shall it carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** Subhead 1.1.02.

**CHAIR:** Subhead 1.1.02.

Shall it carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to use this opportunity to make a few more points with regard to the situation in this province. The Committee of the Whole being part of our budget discussions here I think, I can do that.

Of all the things that I've said over the past few weeks, one issue that I haven't spoken to is one that nags at me and I want to raise it. That is the situation, not all over the place, but many situations that we have with regard to some of our elderly people, in particular, who are in care, extended care.

I have in my office right now at least four files of families who have come to me about the situation of their loved ones. A couple of them relate to the Pleasantview – I forget what it's called, but the new facility, relatively new now in Pleasantville. Some refer to smaller situations in different parts of the province. I think all of them are related to situations here under Eastern Health and some in the Clarendville area.

It's really frustrating for the relatives, the families of these people who are in situations that aren't meeting their needs – not because of the workers, but because there aren't enough workers, because there aren't enough people in care to take care of them.

Now, I have experience and heard of some situations in smaller places where people are very happy, and where their needs are being met and where they're not falling between the cracks. But we have a lot of situations where people do fall between the cracks. It's one case in particular that I keep talking to the family about. It's a case – and I have probably two cases like this – where the loved one, a parent or an elderly brother or a spouse, is in a facility being taken care of, gets sick, has to move into the hospital to be taken care of there. What I'm getting from people is the lack of communication between the different parts of the system, not the best decisions being made, the situation of the person not really being seen as it should be seen, and people falling between the cracks.

They really feel there's no place that they can go with their complaints. Some of them, you know, have written the CEOs of agencies. Some of them have documented things that they're really concerned about. Some of them have gone to the Citizens' Representative. They really feel that they're stymied. There's no place to go.

I think we really do have a need for a review of the long-term care in this province. The facility in Pleasantville – I have no idea how that building could've gotten built the way that it is. It's a building in which I don't know if anybody is happy. I hate going into it. The very building itself doesn't build up a sense of people being taken care of.

Again, I'm not talking about the workers. I'm talking about the system. I'm talking about not having enough workers, not having in some cases enough nurses on night duty in some of our long-term care facilities. We have a lot of things not going right in our long-term care facilities.

We have a lot of things not going right in our long-term care facilities and it really bothers me. I feel helpless as an MHA when people come to me. Some of them say: Yes, the facility has meetings, family meetings once a month. I go to the meetings, I raise the same issues and I get nowhere. I have documentation from family members of the things that have happened; a loved one, probably a parent, being in bed for

hours before being even taken care of for the day.

It's multiple and I just really feel – I would be remiss in not bringing this issue, in the context of budget discussion, to the floor of the House because I cannot be the only MHA who's getting these phone calls and these letters and these emails. I can't be the only one. I know I'm not the only one because, in some cases, I'm getting them from people outside of my district who are frustrated because they've tried to communicate within their district and the government MHA, maybe, is not paying attention to them. So they finally, in frustration, will come to somebody like me – because I had a profile as the health critic – so they come hoping that I'm going to be able to help them. I can't help them. I can try. I can bring their concerns forward. I do that, but we really do have a problem in our long-term care in this province.

I keep saying it's not everywhere. I know that some facilities are wonderful, but we do have a problem. I don't think that agencies are working together, the different departments are working together to really ensure that people's needs are being met.

I don't see the government listening to things like the Nurses' Union with regard to the role of RNs in long-term care. I just don't see them paying attention to the issues that are there. It's a major issue and, like I said, I can't believe that I'm the only MHA who has people coming complaining about our long-term care in this province.

I'm not going to beat this to death. I'm making my point. I really felt I had to stand and make this point because it is such a major concern to me. I'm glad that I've done it. I know nobody right here at this moment is going to do anything about this for me, but I'm going to continue talking about this because it's rampant, because there's too much of it there.

Yes, we have good places, we have people being taken care of but we have other situations where people are not being taken care of. They're lonely. They're in their beds without people paying too much attention to them, simply because there are not enough staff to give the

kind of personal care that is needed, and it is that personal care.

I'm aware of somebody, I met this person, she's now dead but she couldn't see, had very bad hearing and was put in the lockdown unit because nobody knew what to do with her. It wasn't the place where she should have been. She had no social communication – very little, I won't say no – very, very little social communication.

The assessment that was done was a wrong assessment. She was not a person who should have been in that situation, but she had no family here to voice for her, somebody like me. I had a relative, I used to visit her; she wasn't a next of kin. There was nothing that could be done and the thing is that it's not the fault of the workers. It's the fault that we do not have adequate staffing of many of – well, of our public facilities. I mean these are the ones that I'm talking about.

We do have a problem. We need a review of what's happening at Pleasant View. We absolutely need a review of what's going on over there. Probably having said this now publicly, will put this in writing to the Minister of Health and Community Services because I think it's a direction in which we're going to have to go.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

**CLERK:** Subheads 1.1.03 through 7.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.03 to 7.1.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.03 through 7.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Legislature, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** I move that the Committee rise and report having passed without amendment the Estimates of the Legislature.

**CHAIR:** It is moved that the Committee rise and report the Estimates of the Legislature.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of Committee of Supply.

**MR. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Legislature.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Legislature.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the hour, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that we adjourn until 2 o'clock.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn until 2 o'clock.

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 House stands in recess until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Thank you.

**Recess**

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I'd like to welcome the Members back after recess. I'd also like to welcome several visitors that we have in our galleries.

First of all, in the Speaker's gallery today I'd like to welcome representatives from the Combined Councils of Labrador, an organization that has been around for more than 40 years. With us today we have the president from L'Anse au Loup, Mayor Trent O'Brien; the treasurer from L'Anse-au-Clair, the mayor, Mr. Chad Letto; from the Labrador Straits, the vice-president from Forteau, he's the mayor, Mr. Jim Roberts; from Southeast Labrador, the vice-president, he's a Mary's Harbour councillor, Mr. Harold Rumbolt; for the Central Labrador vice-president, Happy Valley-Goose Bay mayor, Mr. Wally Andersen, a former MHA of the House; Labrador North vice-president, Makkovik councillor, Elizabeth Evans-Mitchell; and the executive director of the Combined Councils of Labrador, Ms. Margaret Rumbolt.

A very great welcome to you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** As I say, we have various mediums through which people are able to watch us. Today, watching through our broadcast, I'd like to send special greetings to Mrs. Marsha Alexander's grade seven class from Lourdes Elementary on the Port au Port Peninsula. They are tuning into our broadcast today and are the subject of a Member's statement this afternoon.

A great welcome to you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today for Members' statements we will hear from the hon. Members for the Districts of Exploits, St. George's -

Humber, Stephenville - Port au Port, Burin - Grand Bank and Terra Nova.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DEAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate the Trinity United Church of Botwood on their October 16, 2016, celebration of 90 years of good works in the community.

I had the pleasure of celebrating this milestone with the congregation, town leadership and friends from far and near at what was a memorable day of worship and the breaking of bread.

For 90 years, the Trinity United Church has been ministering and providing spiritual guidance to the community of Botwood. Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, this is the church that, as a youth, I attended many activities throughout the years and it's the church that I have the pleasure of being greeted by each and every morning.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me in wishing the Trinity United Church congratulations on these 90-plus years, and Godspeed on their continued march to a centenarian celebration.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for St. George's - Humber.

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of dedicated volunteers on the Southwest Coast of the province who are combining their love of the outdoors with a respect for fallen soldiers.

Colin and Cindy Seymour, along with other volunteers in the area, are ready to place 158 yellow ribbons – one for each Canadian soldier who lost their life in the war in Afghanistan – along the hiking trail leading to Mark Rock mountain just outside South Branch. There is a monument honouring Sgt. Craig Gillam of that



community. Gillam died in Afghanistan on October 3, 2006. He was 40 years old.

Members of the Gillam family say they are honoured by the dedication being put into the hiking trail up to Mark Rock. Knowing that people still remember and care about the soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice is truly touching.

I ask all Members of this House to join with me in showing their appreciation and dedication to this group of volunteers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for the District of Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. FINN:** Mr. Speaker, our children will eventually be our future leaders and as such, preparing them for this inevitability requires education and training in leadership roles. In a recent visit to Lourdes Elementary on the Port au Port Peninsula, I saw first-hand how valuable this practice can be.

Mrs. Marsha Alexander's grade seven social studies class has undertaken a practical learning exercise in which the classroom has become a mini replica of our House of Assembly. With only 13 students, the ad hoc House of Assembly required some minor tweaking that is unable to include all electoral districts; however, this has only encouraged the students to engage in much broader debates.

Interestingly, in this classroom, the student who plays the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, Katie Gastia, also happens to be the minister of Transportation and Works and, conveniently, the premier happens to represent my neighbouring district in St. George's - Humber.

Hats off to Mrs. Marsha Alexander for taking a unique approach to teaching our children about our political system while inspiring these leaders of tomorrow. Also, a sincere thank you to her students and school principal, Ms. Alison Marche, for inviting me to their school.

Thank you. Enjoy the broadcast.

**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, during the fall sitting of the House, new laws were passed to help curb impaired driving. Amongst those advocating for changes were various chapters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in the province, including the Burin Peninsula chapter.

MADD Burin Peninsula does not confine its activities to lobbying decision makers. Rather, it is very proactive in tackling the social problem of drunk driving. Recently, it again demonstrated that proactive approach when it brought together students from across the Burin Peninsula at the Fortune Arena.

As it did three years ago in Marystown, MADD Burin Peninsula held a mock crash, an event where various stakeholders, such as first responders, the RCMP and local performers, came together to present a realistic scenario of a vehicle accident with horrific results, Mr. Speaker.

Laws to deal with impaired driving are important, but it's MADD's belief that education is also vital in driving home that message. In this case, education came from a very realistic and moving presentation, Mr. Speaker.

I call on all Members of this hon. House to join me in thanking the many participants who joined forces to make this event possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Terra Nova.

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the efforts of a community charity in my district.

Since its inception in 2013, the Power to Hope charity has raised funds in support of cancer-related programs and events across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Over the past five years, Power to Hope's success has resulted in excess of \$250,000 being donated to programs like Young Adult Cancer Canada's Shave for the Brave campaign and the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy's Cancer Care Foundation.

This past weekend, volunteers with Power to Hope organized Shawn's Journey in recognition of Shawn Avery, an 18-year employee of the Terra Nova Golf Resort who walked most days between his home in Bunyan's Cove and Port Blandford.

Initially diagnosed in 2004 with a cancerous tumour, Shawn carried on for 10 years until on Christmas Day in 2016 he succumbed to the deadly illness. Shawn was 48.

Shawn was well respected, he had a remarkable memory for hockey stats and birthdays and he was best described as everybody's friend.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing Shawn's legacy and the Power to Hope Charity for their commitment to fighting cancer.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize May as Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month.

Cystic fibrosis is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults. There are currently more than 4,200 Canadians living with this devastating disease, including 85 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Cystic fibrosis occurs when a child inherits two abnormal genes, one from each parent. Approximately one in 25 Canadians carry an

abnormal version of the gene responsible for the disease.

Cystic Fibrosis Canada is committed to finding a cure. It has invested \$244 million in funding research, innovation and clinical care, making it an international leader in the cause. As a result, Canadians with cystic fibrosis have one of the highest median survival rates in the world.

Cystic Fibrosis Canada is organizing activities and events this month to raise awareness and funds to support research, care and advocacy initiatives. Cystic Fibrosis Canada is committed to ensuring that those living with this disease have access to the treatments and medications they need to live longer and healthier lives.

I ask my colleagues in this hon. House to join me and support the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living with this disease by learning more about cystic fibrosis and raising awareness in your community.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We join with government in recognizing May as Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month.

In doing so, we also recognize the tremendous work done by Cystic Fibrosis Canada and its many members and volunteers. Through their great work and a huge investment of nearly quarter of a billion dollars, much research, innovation and clinical care has been provided to the cause.

Evidence clearly shows the positive impact of this amazing work, as Canadians living with cystic fibrosis have one of the highest median survival rates in the world.

I encourage all Members of this House to help raise awareness around this disease and support the cause whenever possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister. I join the minister in recognizing all those who are living with cystic fibrosis, along with families and health care providers who work so hard to ensure their health and well-being. We can all celebrate the improvements in diagnosis and treatment for CF which allows those living with the disease to live longer and fuller lives.

It is important our province keep up with national innovations and diagnosis, medication and other aspects of disease management so people here have the same opportunity as those in other provinces.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, today is a fitting day to continue a well-deserved celebration – a commemoration – of the life and times of the flying fisherman and farmer of Daniel's Harbour.

With great regret – to me, to my family, to the Premier and to everyone who knew him – Stedman Leander Brophy fell into eternal rest on Monday, May 7 after a life of 84 years, a life marked by hard work and by progress.

Born in King's Cove, Sted Brophy grew up in Port Saunders but settled in Daniel's Harbour on the Great Northern Peninsula. He was a man of many talents: a fisherman, a seafarer, a hunter, a logger, a farmer, and at the age of 40, took to the sky as a pilot.

A wonderfully rough and gruff character, Sted had as big a heart as were the incredible dreams that he made come true.

His reputation for hard work, perseverance and being a charter among characters, was laid bear some years back in a special *Land and Sea* episode called the *Flying Fisherman of Daniel's Harbour* where Sted was profiled with precise consideration of how large this man really was.

The profile of both the man and his family – all of whom worked the Northern Peninsula's woods and waters and who created one of the most successful farming operations in all of Newfoundland and Labrador – was well made.

He was a man who made things happen. In 1969, he and his wife Effie started the successful outfitting business which is still in operation today by their sons, Leander and Nell.

But that was but one of many pursuits. He was a hugely successful dairy farmer who saw solutions not problems. When he couldn't access milk processing facilities in Corner Brook for his dairy operations because he was told the distance was too great, he established his own plant in Daniel's Harbour. Viking Trail Dairy was a household name in Newfoundland and Labrador for many years, and today his sons Les, Leander and Nell are following in their father's footsteps with Brophy's Dairy Farm Limited, a true success story of Newfoundland and Labrador's agriculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, people like Sted Brophy are the backbone on which our province's agriculture and agrifoods industry is built, and today we honour his role in growing it.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, on behalf of us all, I offer condolences to his wife of 58 years, Effie; to his devoted children: Marlene, Leander, Geraldine, Melita, Leslie, Byron and Nell; his 12 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, and his entire network of family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, if ever you're driving up the Great Northern Peninsula and see a small plane flying in back of Parsons Pond, it just might be Sted flying a load of hunters and meat back from the camps.

You see, Mr. Speaker, Sted was never much for a day off.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LESTER:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We join with the government in remembering Mr. Brophy. In doing so, we also take time to recognize him as a true pioneer: an entrepreneur, a man of resilience, a jack-of-all-trades, and if I may say, those are the attributes of a great farmer.

Mr. Brophy was an all-around hardworking, determined and successful resident of our province. I had the privilege of meeting him on several occasions and he was well-known throughout the agriculture industry. Mr. Brophy was a well-respected individual who had a tremendous impact on the agriculture industry, particularly on the Northern Peninsula. He was a remarkable man with an adventurous spirit.

Mr. Brophy and his family persevered in the face of adversity, and a prime example of that was in the late '90s. They rose out of the ashes when a barn fire destroyed their dairy herd and facility. Mr. Brophy and his family rebuilt and expanded to be one of the province's most productive and modern dairy operations.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I offer our sincerest condolences to Mr. Brophy's entire family and his many friends, and to all those whose lives were touched by this resilient and extraordinary individual.

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.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I offer my condolences and that of the NDP caucus to the family of Stedman Brophy. He was indeed a pioneer of the agriculture industry. I remember that *Land and Sea* program referred to by the minister. He has left a wonderful legacy to his children and to the province. Young people looking at a career in agriculture would do well to recognize his energy, vision and capacity for hard work.

Today's industry may look very different from Mr. Brophy's days, but those qualities will be just as valuable in achieving success, and I wish success to his family. We all honour the role Stedman Brophy played in building our provincial agricultural industry and he won't be forgotten easily, I don't think.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

#### Oral Questions

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When asked on Monday about concerns about the Premier's involvement in the harassment complaints, the Premier stated: I did not insert myself in the process.

I ask the Premier: How can members of the public and Members of the House of Assembly have confidence that the systemic issues of harassment will be dealt with when the report goes back to you?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Inaudible) about the position and what this process looked like for quite some time now. It's been very obvious that the Commissioner that is in place to actually do this work – and it's an

individual. I want to just remind people, again, that this is an individual that was put in place by a resolution of the House of Assembly, a resolution that the leader of the Opposition and former leader of the Opposition, including the Third Party, all supported, saying that this individual had the wherewithal, had the experience, the expertise to carry out such a review.

Mr. Speaker, the allegation about my inserting myself into this is completely wrong, and I said this on Monday. What happened was I met with the individuals that were making allegations. There were a number of options that were available to those individuals. The decided option that was taken by all parties involved was for me to ask for the Commissioner to step in for a review.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On April 27 the Premier stated: I've engaged the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

I ask the Premier: Do you expect to have conversations with the Commissioner during the investigation? Will the Premier remove himself from this process?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things with the Commissioner, he has the power to come in and actually speak to any MHA in this House of Assembly. That's the authority that he has and the jurisdiction that he has. He also has the authority to go out and get independent expert advice if he needs that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you, no way will I be inserting myself proactively. If the review Commissioner invites me and asks me to come in, subpoenas me to come in, well then I have no other choice – no different than the leader of the Opposition, I would say, or any other Member of this House of Assembly.

Let's not forget that the allegations – there were three options that would have been included, Mr. Speaker. The MHAs that would have made allegations, these options are available to them to use whatever process they think works best for them.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If my colleague from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune filed a code of conduct complaint against another Member with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, the report will come back to the House for disclosure.

Will the reports on the complaints the Premier filed on behalf of the caucus colleagues be coming back to the House for disclosure?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, as I said many times now publicly – and I'm sure the leader of the Opposition would have been aware of this – is that any information that would be included in any report that would come back to me, it is my intention to get that stuff out there publicly. But we have to – those that would make the allegations, they would need to be involved.

I think that's fair that whatever public information that would go out there, number one, would have to be done in consultation with those that are submitting the allegations under this review process. I will say, Mr. Speaker, once again, that it would be my view that as much information that could be made public, that is what I intend to do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The legislation does not require a report to the Premier to be tabled in the House. Such a report will not be given to the Speaker, not to be given to the Management Commission, not to be given to this House, but only given the Premier, the complainant and the accused.

Where you noted, yes, what guarantee do we have that these reports and any recommendations for penalties will be tabled here in the House?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I do remind the hon. Member that matters dealing with this process that we're dealing with, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, is clearly the preview of the Legislature and would be dealt with through the Management Commission, so just a warning.

Premier, if you chose to comment, please.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I just reiterate and remind people the decisions that were made by those who were submitting allegations. Mr. Speaker, at any time I would imagine if people wanted to switch the process and go back to the report going to the House of Assembly, that could happen as well.

Mr. Speaker, under no circumstances did I insert myself into this process. This came as a result of discussions that were had. All options were considered. Even to the communication that went out public.

I will guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, we want to clean up this House of Assembly and for anyone sitting in the Opposition or anyone in this House of Assembly to think that the Opposition Party has not dealt with this, that isn't factual. That would not be true. They have had to deal with this. We still have people sitting in the Opposition caucus today that did something that were inappropriate outside this House of Assembly and the leader of the Opposition (inaudible) –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, the legislation sets out tough penalties, from a reprimand right up to declaring a Member's seat vacant; but under the legislation, such recommendations shall not take effect unless the report comes to the House rather than to the Premier.

Why did the Premier take the one route that may not lead to penalties?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** As I said, Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to make everything that would be made available to me, to make that public. We have to consider those that have made the allegations. That is the commitment that I've made.

I would imagine the leader of the Opposition would do something similar. I'd like for the leader of the Opposition to give his view; maybe he should ask his own leader because they refused to take and listen to the concerns of the code of conduct of their own Members and still sits in their own caucus.

Mr. Speaker, there are really some people twisting some words around. Let me be very clear, based on when the review comes back to me, it would have been my intention to get as much information out there publicly as possible. I think what's fundamental in all of this is that every single Member of this House of Assembly has a role to play and I think a better code of conduct is required.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister has said that the issues around clinical trials, those particularly pertaining to childhood cancers, are resolved and approved.

Minister, what were these issues that they experienced? Are they in line with those issues that many other Newfoundland and Labrador

researchers have experienced and raised directly to the minister on multiple occasions?

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

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

The Health Research Ethics Authority and the board that's constituted underneath it is an arm's-length body from the Department of Health and from government. I have no insight into what the nature of those issues may have been.

All I have is I have been informed by the Health Research Ethics Authority that these issues have been resolved. There is no challenge now for children in this province to gain access to the latest clinical research and trials if their cases warrant it, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sequence Bio also released a letter from 25-year veteran researcher and family doctor Dennis O'Keefe who stated: "If you speak to most clinical trial sponsors they will tell you that they are not bringing any new clinical trials to this province because the Health Ethics Research Board are impossible to deal with."

Minister, will you stop discounting the many credible voices that clearly see major issues with the ethics board and take swift action to rectify it?

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

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

I can do little better than reiterate what I've said in the House for the last two days and to the media. There has been an allegation, a complaint made about the process that the Health Research Ethics Authority and its board are following

with regard to applications. I have undertaken, along with my staff, to look at that and find out if those complaints are actually substantiated. If they are, I will look to see what options I have, Mr. Speaker.

I, along with the Health Research Ethics Authority, am here to protect the people of this province and work in their best interest and I will continue to do so.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. O'Keefe went on to say that the board's "lack of respect and consideration for the people and patients of this province is shameful."

Are these latest complaints, which line up with previous criticisms made by Sequence Bio, enough to get the minister to immediately step in? This has been going on for months, time for action to be taken.

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the process that the Member opposite is referring to is actually set in place, prior to 2011, by his colleagues. It was done in response to concerns about helicopter genomics and unethical practices that exposed the people of this province to, if not risk, then certainly research for no benefit to them.

The Health Research Ethics Authority has themselves identified challenges and has constituted an internal review. I am looking at the substance of the allegations to see what merit they may have. If they have merit, we will take action, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the evidence dictates that the board is not working in the best interests of

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly around health care. You are the minister responsible.

Chief science officer, Michael Phillips, with many years of experience working with other boards in Canada and around the world stated: “My experience since I have been in Newfoundland and Labrador has been that the HREB here is out of sync with the rest of the country and they aren’t working with the researchers in a collaborative fashion. Honestly, right now, I think that the current HREB in this province is broken.”

I ask the minister: Can these health professionals and researchers with years of experience all be wrong?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, I have received allegations and a complaint and I will look into their merit. If there is an issue, we will deal with it.

What I would point out is that letters such as the gentleman opposite alluded to are actually not uncommon, unfortunately, in every health research ethics authority across the country. There is no health research ethics authority that is popular with researchers; it is the nature of a regulator.

Once again, I will look at the process and the allegations that have been made. If there is substance to them, we will act, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, along with countless others, have pleaded for months with the minister to address these serious issues, but to no avail. I now call upon the Premier to take a leadership role in this matter and see that full attention is given to resolving this long-standing issue which has millions of research dollars held up, but, more

importantly, denying potential life-saving treatment.

Will you act, Mr. Premier?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We spent three years dealing with health outcomes based on what’s been left with situations; things like the replacement of the Waterford, long-term care, the replacement of the hospital in Corner Brook. Mr. Speaker, things that this, the leader of the Opposition is now referring to is improving health care in our province. I will guarantee you this minister and this government are taking proactive measures to deal with that.

All I need to go back to is the work that’s being done on mental health and addictions in this province, Mr. Speaker. I will guarantee you that this minister here takes the health concerns of this population and Newfoundland and Labrador very seriously. The options and the allegations, the claims that you’re making, based on a process that you had put in place, this minister will deal with it and explore what options they have available to deliver great health care to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nobody is disputing that we don’t have great people working in health care doing great work. What we’re saying here is we’re losing out on clinical research that could save lives because of inaction by the minister and because there’s a broken process here with the ethics board.

I ask the Premier, step in and fix it. You’re at the helm. Do that, please.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!



**MR. BRAZIL:** I ask the minister: Why the sudden push to enforce the 1.6 busing rule while it's currently under review? Can we assume the review has been completed?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to answer the question. The policy has not changed. Allow me to repeat that, the policy has not changed. Courtesy busing is still available.

What is happening here today is the English School District is applying consistency across the board, across the province on the 1.6 rule.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our understanding from the previous minister was that the 1.6 busing rule would be under review. So while under review, why are you automatically making this a big issue?

We are still asking: Is it under review? If it is, has it been completed? If it isn't, then, obviously, this is going to be the standard and we need to deal with the situation around safety and people travelling on our roads.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will again repeat. The policy remains the same as it has been since some time in the 1970s, Mr. Speaker. There is now going to be consistency applied across the province by the English School District. Courtesy busing is still available.

I will also say, Mr. Speaker, the 1.6 distance rule is pretty consistent across the country. I can

count probably at least eight provinces or seven provinces that have the 1.6 rule, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the thousands of parents who've weighted in, the multitude of municipalities, the number of agencies who have talked about safety here, who've lobbied government to do a review on this, obviously, this has gone on deaf ears.

I ask the minister: Will she look at lobbying the Minister of Education to do a full review on the 1.6 kilometre busing?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that the Minister of Education listens very well to what is happening in our province, listens very well to those who are utilizing the system: the parents, the students and stakeholders involved in this. I am very confident he would do that.

Unlike, I would say, the Members opposite who did not do anything under their watch on this issue.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in debate, the Minister of Natural Resources said that she was supportive of Fortis, and that she does not have a problem with Fortis owning transmission lines.

I ask the minister: Has Fortis asked for or put in a proposal to purchase assets for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that the Member opposite and the Members opposite do not have a problem with Fortis; I would say that, Mr. Speaker. Fortis has been around in this province through Newfoundland Power for almost as long as we've had an electrical system, Mr. Speaker.

They currently own 63 per cent of all transmission and distribution lines in this province, Mr. Speaker. So, of course, we wouldn't have a problem with Fortis. It's a great company. It's an absolutely great company, listed on the New York Stock Exchange, doing very good things, Mr. Speaker.

No, I am not in receipt of anything from Fortis, at all, to increase the amount of transmission distribution lines. Of course, that is, that we don't have anything at this point in time. My point has been that this is a great company and that they currently own an awful lot of the transmission lines in this province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The current CEO of Nalcor owns up to 5 per cent of the shares of Fortis, representing millions of dollars.

I ask the minister: Has Mr. Marshall told you that he has had any conversations regarding the sale of transmission lines with Fortis?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll hearken back to the *Conflict of Interest Act*, which requires that anybody holding 10 per cent of a public company must disclose that. I will say that in the contract for the CEO of Nalcor, it's actually at 5 per cent levels.

Mr. Marshall has been reviewed under the conflict of interest legislation and is not in conflict of interest. In fact, I went so far as to

write him a letter – and I have a copy of it here, if the Member does not remember it I'll be happy to table it – back in November of 2016, saying there may be a perceived conflict so you must remove yourself from any conversations dealing with Fortis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I read the letter. The previous CEO it was explicit that they could not hold any shares in Fortis, that individual or any family member. This CEO holds 5 per cent.

In the letter she refers – the conflict of interest – he needs to advise her if he thinks at any point in time he's in a conflict – he's in a conversation that might be in conflict. How does that make any sense, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister, does she support the sale of the Labrador-Island link and transmission structure to Fortis?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I'm a little confused by the question.

The Members opposite actually made a deal with Emera, a Nova Scotia company, to do just that. A Nova Scotia company, Emera, actually owns –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS. COADY:** – a piece of the –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I will not tolerate interruptions of the identified speaker; final warning.

Minister.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a little confusing as to they were okay with Emera but they're not okay with anyone else.

Mr. Speaker, we have not had any discussions with Fortis. There is nothing on the table to buy the Labrador-Island link. The Labrador-Island link was very expensive to build, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that it's not, at this point in time, in any discussion or otherwise, but I can say I'm confused by the question considering he brought in Emera himself.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** I'd advise our Minister of Natural Resources, Emera is related to the link between the Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. I said Labrador. It's quite different. She didn't get that part, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, private corporation taxes are passed on to consumers through their electricity rates. With a Crown corporation those taxes are not required to be paid so it's not passed on to the consumer.

Is the minister okay with this approach with the sale of assets and could possibly be added to the electricity rates?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not quite sure of where the Member is going with this question. As I've said, there is no conversation, at this point in time, about the additional sale or the sale of any transmission lines or distribution lines.

I will remind the people of this province that 63 per cent of all transmission and distribution lines is currently owned by Fortis. I will say, that Emera has a big share, of course, in this province through their deal with Nalcor and with the former administration because of the Muskrat Falls, but I guess that's okay because

Frank Coleman is on the board of Emera. Is that the whole basis of this information?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

**MS. PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Conference Board of Canada's annual report card on innovation gave this province a grade of D minus.

After being in office for three years I ask the minister: Why did our province score so low?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very exciting things that are happening here in Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to innovation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** We've been resetting the innovation agenda. We have a tech sector work plan that's happened. We've created InnovateNL and just this morning, as part of the NATI technology summit, because it's Innovation Week happening, we announced \$650,000 to support the Genesis Centre, an incubator to start from seed to the whole lifecycle to get businesses to grow and scale up. We're supporting 20 companies in the tech sector each year for the next two years. We're doing a significant amount of work to grow the tech sector.

It is 4,000 jobs, \$1.6 billion and growing. It is one of our greatest opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador and we are excelling in innovation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

**MS. PERRY:** Mr. Speaker, the province, just a few short years ago, was graded at B and under a Liberal government we've fallen to a D-minus grade. Your approach isn't working.

Newfoundland and Labrador was ranked 22nd among 26 provinces and peer countries. Our province is lagging behind when it comes to innovation.

Minister, how do you intend to turn this poor rating around?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at any report, you have to look at the indicators and what is being assessed. When it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador, based on that report in Canada, we rank in sixth place of all the provinces based on those assessments. Newfoundland and Labrador ranks extremely high for entrepreneurial spirit, new start-ups and those tech companies because we're creating those opportunities. We're creating that climate.

When you have to look at the right level of investment as to there are gaps that's happened when it comes to IP and making sure that we have the right IP policy at Memorial University, something that has been raised time and time again by the previous administration. They never addressed it. They never dealt with the problems that many tech companies and start-ups want to see in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've created a plan, our Premier through the Cabinet Committee on Jobs established a (inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

**MS. PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our province performed poorly on research and development as well.

Minister, is this the result of your dismantling of the Research & Development Corporation?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, the Research & Development Corporation was changed because the business community and those innovators have said that they need better approach. What they had implemented – the Research & Development Corporation of 2009 created by the former administration – did not work for the best benefit of the people.

If you look at innovation that's happening, and other provinces that have the standalone innovation corporation, like Saskatchewan, they rank lower than us in this report.

When it comes to InnovateNL, we've got innovation leaders. We've got a connectivity with business financing from start-up to scale-up to connecting, and we have not cut any funding when it comes to programming that is available. Now, somebody can go from pre-commercial to commercial to international without having to go to multiple entities. We've reduced red tape. We're doing things better.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

**MS. PERRY:** Our province has also scored low on venture capital. Since the Liberals have taken office, all economic indicators for this province are getting worse.

When will the minister admit that the high taxes and fees in place for the last two years, including the levy, poor regulatory decisions and poor oversight, is sending money outside of this province?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, we've seen rapid investment in growth in many companies. If you look at the bright forecast for the St. John's economy, the Conference Board of Canada has highlighted that and the growth from GDP. I don't know where the Member opposite is, but she's completely absent when it comes to anything that's going on through Innovation Week, the business community events and the activities.

The Premier made a major announcement in a company, Quorum, that had four employees that were based in Alberta that decided they wanted to come to Newfoundland and Labrador. Because technology companies can be borderless, they decided to set up operations here in the province. They've grown since 2006 to 89 employees and they're going to continue to grow.

Good things are happening here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Venture capital, there are opportunities, there are two funds that are available and more foreseen and –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This afternoon's government private Member's motion calls for a vague process that respects the rights of unionized and non-unionized employees.

I ask the Premier: Does he mean his government supports non-unionized employees replacing unionized workers who are on strike? Is he saying he supports using scab labour during strikes or lockouts?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure – I'm absolutely certain – that the hon. Member will want to stand and celebrate and congratulate the Member for Labrador West for bringing forward this private Member's motion so that this House can engage in a discussion about the importance of labour relations legislation and regulations, about what's working and about what we need to investigate further.

To come to a reasoned conclusion that a broad-based consultation that includes not only those who are active in the labour community, but those employers, those with expertise, experts in the field of labour relations can come forward and examine our system and bring us good, solid expert advice. That's what the Member for Lab West has done and we should all applaud that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, in his vague private Member's motion he asked the House to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process, thereby avoiding prolonged work stoppages. We've asked questions about that numerous times.

I ask the Premier: Will he introduce anti-replacement legislation to protect the rights for fair bargaining for our workers? I say to the Premier that is the measure that is needed.

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, nobody should be afraid of or unwelcoming to the voices and the opinions, not only of the labour community because that's what we will receive – if the House assents to this important private Member's resolution, we will ask the labour community to bring forward their points of view.

The hon. Member says that the labour community's points of view are vague and unfounded. I disagree. This is an opportunity for

us to hear, to be able to receive consultation and to formulate what that consultation means, and that will include the labour community.

I appreciate, to a certain degree, the hon. Member does not think that's worthwhile. The Member for Labrador West and this side of the House does.

**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'd like to point out to the minister that my colleague talked about the private Member's motion as being vague.

Mr. Speaker, D-J Composites workers are heading into their 17th month of being locked out. The ICO strike now heads into its seventh week and who knows where that's going.

I ask the Premier: Why are we debating a private Member's motion later today when a lockout has always been completely within his power to solve, by acting on the recommendation of the Voisey's Bay Industrial Inquiry to allow for binding arbitration to settle disputes where collective bargaining has truly failed, and which is a recommendation that the labour movement agreed with?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, conciliation officers are at work, working with both sides, both the collective bargaining units and the employers in both circumstances referenced.

I will point out to the hon. Member, as I'm sure she's well aware, that in the situation with IOC, for example, the conciliation officer was able to create a bridge between both sides, a meeting was held and there was a tentative agreement. Unfortunately, the tentative agreement could not be ratified by the membership, but the conciliation efforts continue to this day.

We have a very, very robust labour relations environment regulatory system in Newfoundland and Labrador, but as is the case pointed out by the hon. Member for Lab West, we can always improve that, that's the value of (inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Order, please!

**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.

This afternoon's private Member's motion calls for measures which respect the rights of unionized workers. D-J Composites in Gander has locked out their employees for 17 months. If that isn't bad faith, what is?

I ask the Premier: What is the Premier's answer to companies who take away all power from the workers by locking them out? What is your response to them?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, it's always extremely difficult, frustrating, anxious moments for both employees and employers whenever there's a labour dispute.

We appreciate that in the situation with D-J Composites, it has been a long strike. There has been a lockout that has been in place. Conciliation officers are in place to assist to try to bridge the lockout that is currently underway. We'll continue on with those efforts.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, what's important that preoccupies this House is that we are able and we're prepared to look at our labour relations regulations and environment to be able to ensure that it best meets the needs of the 21st century labour environment for Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions has ended.

I would like to bring to the Member's attention, please, if I may. Further to a Ministerial Statement, Mr. John Bennett, from the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis foundation, is in our public gallery.

I'd like to welcome you, Sir.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Court Security Act, 2010, Bill 16.

**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 Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS opioid addictions 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 addiction 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 would include a drug addiction counsellor at the hospital and a drug awareness program in the local schools.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is my sixth time presenting this and every time there's noted, when the petitions come in from residents, nearly 50 names on each one of these. Every day it keeps accumulating, all the different names of people who realize the impact that opioid and addictions issues have on our society and individuals. They continue to want to lobby to have a solution put in play. In this case, they're actually even recommending. They've done some of their own research; they've got some of the collaborative approaches with health professionals and that in play.

We have an infrastructure on Bell Island, a very effective, very efficient hospital. What we lack is a minor part of the financial investment, but a major part in being able to provide a proper service, and that's the counselling services to provide a methadone or Suboxone clinic so that those who are grappling with opioid addictions and other types of addictions can get the services that they need so that they can become more productive.

What we're asking here is a serious collaboration between Eastern Health, the Department of Health and the clinical hospital that we have on Bell Island to come up with a solution working with the community that

makes sense. The recommendation that's been outlined, all that needs to be done is to find a way to work the existing assets, do proper training so to be able to provide the services that are necessary.

We've all realized – we've debated it in this House – every agency out there who works in this field will talk about the fact that there are easy solutions, but there has to be somebody who will step up to the plate and do it. In this case we have an asset that's ready; we just need the will and the direction. I think the Department of Health can take that direction and say, you know what, there are certain areas here we can offer this, there are certain pilots we can put in play. There are already programs that we know are being provided and can work.

We don't have to invest a lot of money in the bricks and mortar; we have that available to go. Why don't we take that approach and direct someone to do it? I'm asking the minister to step in here, ask and direct the department and Eastern Health to work with the hospital and the agencies over there to try and put these services in place.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Point of order.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I want to date back to Question Period, if I could, under – I'll quote section 49.

When the Premier spoke he referenced a Member on this side in regard to an incident of possible harassment that may have occurred and was spoken of outside of this Chamber. It's my understanding that Member has been advised by you that tapes were reviewed, interviews were done and there was no indication of anything to be done any further.

On that basis, I ask that you consider that the Premier withdraw those comments. It's to our understanding nothing has come of that and would be offensive to the sitting Member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

If I could respond to the point of order, what I would suggest is that there are at least seven witnesses to the incident referred to by the Premier. Again, we can continue on down that route.

The second part is I don't think the Premier actually referenced any Member.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. A. PARSONS:** If I could speak without being heckled during a point of order by the Member opposite, that would be much appreciated. If he wishes to contribute to the point of order, I welcome the commentary from the Member opposite.

What I would suggest is there are seven witnesses to this episode that was referenced by the Premier today. Secondly, the Premier did not actually reference a single Member on the other side.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I believe what I'd like to do is to take this under advisement because there are some issues here around point of privilege and point of order. I'd ask all Members that –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Some order, please!

I will take the point of order under advisement and I'll report back to the House as soon as I can.



Thank you.

I would ask the Member for Cape St. Francis for your petition, please.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I'm sorry we got the Minister of Justice so upset.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Your petition, please.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** The petition of the undersigned: school age children are walking to school in areas where there are no sidewalks, no traffic lights and through areas without crosswalks and putting the safety of children at risk. Therefore, the petitioners call upon government.

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

Mr. Speaker, I brought this petition to the House now several times. It's a huge issue in my area. I heard the Acting Minister of Education today, the Minister of Natural Resources, talk about 1.6 and trying to get consistency and stuff like that, but I want to explain to the minister that there are a lot of areas in our province where safety should come foremost with regard to anything.

When it comes to our children, safety should be put forth no matter what. I live in an area where there's a lot of traffic. My school is in Torbay, there was a traffic count done showing that there are 17,000 cars a day that travel along this road. These roads have no sidewalks. There is no street lighting there to show there's a crosswalk there, and it's a huge issue.

While the minister today talked a little bit about courtesy busing, it's a very important part of mine, too. I'm talking about children in grade kindergarten to grade four. We really have to consider what we're doing here and the consequences that could happen with small children on these roads.

During this time of year it's not as bad, but in the winter months, Mr. Speaker, snow clearing is not the best. We're putting people out on dirt, gravel roads where ice buildup is a huge

problem and safety is the foremost of my concerns. I'm really concerned about the safety of our children. They'll go back and say, you didn't do it or we didn't do it; somebody do it. It has to be done because something is going to happen. This is about the safety of our children.

Where there are no sidewalks and where there's a lot of high traffic volume, we should have a look at it. I'm not asking to blame anybody or we were going to do it, you were going to do it. I'm asking for it to be looked at. Where there's an area where somebody could be seriously hurt or killed, please look at those areas.

It's about the safety of our children, and that's the reason why I'll continue to present this petition.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to respond to the petition as Acting Minister of Education today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oh, sorry.

**MS. COADY:** I did rise in the House today and talk about the fact that there has been no policy change. I want to make sure people understand that there has been no policy change. The fact is courtesy seating will continue. The school board is now applying consistency.

I do respect the Member opposite for bringing forward the concerns. I think, obviously, the minister responsible will listen to those concerns, and it has been said. As has been indicated in the past, we are open to hearing what needs to be done.

I will say that providing a safe and reliable school transportation system always is foremost in the mind of this government. The budget of 2018 invested almost \$59 million in school transportation system.

We look at our colleagues across the country, what's happening across the country. We listen to petitions, as was just presented, but we also have to be mindful that \$59 million is invested in our busing transportation system. We do have to provide a safe, reliable school transportation system for this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you for the response; my apologies.

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I now call on the Member for Labrador West to introduce the resolution standing in his name, Motion 3.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LETTO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to begin consultations with unions and employers to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process thereby avoiding prolonged work stoppages while respecting the rights of both the unionized and non-unionized employees such that the long-term sustainability of various industries is preserved to the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

**MR. LETTO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's a pleasure for me to rise and present this private Member's resolution today. I guess I would be remiss if I did not start by having a few words about the situation that has arisen in Labrador West today and has been.

We're actually now at the beginning of the eighth week, as opposed to the seventh that was mentioned by a Member of the Third Party. Yesterday marked the beginning of the eighth week of this work stoppage.

As a resident of Labrador West and an employee of the Iron Ore Company for thirty years, I have experienced many of these work stoppages in the past. I will say today, uncategorically – I guess maybe because of the position I find myself in today – that this one is like no other. There are a number of reasons for that, and of course I won't get into the reasons.

When we talk about work stoppages, we have the unionized people who are on strike, serving on the picket lines – and as I've said in this House so many times, I respect the right of the workers and I respect certainly the mandate that the workers have given the negotiating team to strike. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of friends and neighbours, and friends of neighbours of those who are on strike, who are non-unionized members of this company that find themselves having to cross picket lines, and it's very stressful for them. It's very uncomfortable. It's not something they prefer to do; nevertheless, we have to respect their positions as well and their rights and the right of the company to use their non-unionized staff to access the workplace and do what needs to be done.

We've all heard the accusations and we've all heard the reports of replacement workers being on site. I've been working very closely with both the union president and the president of IOC on these matters. I've been at it since day one, actually, Mr. Speaker. The union membership has shared some incidents with me that I've forwarded to the president of IOC for confirmation or denial. So that dialogue continues to exist there.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we have to respect in all of this is the right of collective bargaining. I can go through the process but I don't think I need to do that. That's why we in this House, on this side of the House, I'm sure everybody who's involved in this would prefer to see this matter resolved by the collective bargaining process. That's why we have that collective bargaining process in place, is to be able to settle situations,

whether it's a lockout, whether it's a strike, but in order for that collective bargaining process to succeed we need people talking. We need both sides talking to each other; not to whomever, but they need to talk to each other.

That's what we as a government – myself and the Premier met with the president of the union. I've talked to the president of IOC and expressed that concern to them that this needs to be done through the collective bargaining process.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've heard in Question Period that Members of the Third Party feel that the PMR is too vague. Well, I consider the PMR to be wide open because what the PMR does state, Mr. Speaker, is that we, as a government, begin the consultations with both labour and employer, labour and industry, to identify measures.

Some of these measures, I'm sure in our consultations with the labour movement, will include anti-replacement worker legislation or binding arbitration legislation. I'm sure these issues will be raised. When the time comes for that report to come back to us, it's a decision that we'll have to make, as the House of Assembly, what we accept as the right way to go.

Mr. Speaker, we have to keep in mind that we do require balance. It's a balance. When you look at some of the reports that come out, Mr. Speaker, and this one in particular, it says that: "Labour relations laws cover different aspects of labour relations including: the process through which unions gain and lose the right to represent workers in collective bargaining; the rules that either allow or prohibit making union membership and/or union dues a condition of employment ...."

It goes on to state, Mr. Speaker, that "Labour relations laws increase labour market flexibility when they balance the interests of workers, union representatives, and employers. However, when such laws favours one group over another, prevent innovation, or prescribed outcomes rather than foster negotiation ...."

In anything we do, Mr. Speaker, we have – that's what it's all about, it's finding that

balance. There may be a time when we will need that legislation in place, but, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do in all this is to respect the right of the union worker.

What I see and what I – I've been on the picket line in Labrador West and we've mentioned the D-J Composites situation in Gander, they've been locked out now for 18 months. That is what we've got to avoid, Mr. Speaker, are these situations. It's the eight-week-long strikes, six-month-long strikes, the lockouts, we have to avoid that. I feel, at this point, that we need – the time has come to take a very serious look at our labour laws in this province.

That needs to be done in consultation with unions, with the Federation of Labour, the Board of Trades, the Employers' Council, whomever, and industry. I think we need to take a balanced approach to it. I'm sure that as we go through this consultation process that all aspects of collective bargaining, as well as labour laws, will come into play.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we've worded this PMR the way it is worded. It's because we need to hear from all sides. We need to hear from all aspects of the labour movement, and I'm sure we will, and rightly so. I think the time has come that we really need to sit down and take a serious look at where we're going as a province with labour laws.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful, too, that we don't set up a regime whereby industry is deterred from setting up shop in this province, because it's important that we have the industry and we have the employers because without the employers, we have no employees, whether they're unionized or non-unionized. We have to make sure that we create an environment where industry is welcome there, we're open for business, where businesses are welcome there.

There's more to this than talking about just the IOCs and the D-J Composites of the world. This PMR covers all aspects of the labour movement, all aspects of business and industry. It just so happens that the situation that I find myself in in Labrador West, that we find ourselves in, in Labrador West, has raised the issue again, has brought it to the forefront when we get

accusations of companies using replacement workers.

Mr. Speaker, that does nothing for the community. I can guarantee you, because I'm experiencing it. It does nothing because we have families against families. We have aunts against uncles. We have friends against friends. Some are working inside the gate and some are on strike. They all have a job to do. When you get accusations of replacement workers, it certainly raises the stress level within the community. It does nothing because we have to remember as well, Mr. Speaker, that when we have a large corporation – and I use Labrador West again, because IOC is the only operating mine there. With the IOC shut down, there is no big business as such. There's no big industry.

We have to remember that when a big industry shuts down, everybody in the community is affected. Not only the people who work at IOC, but it's also the supply industry. It's the wives, the children, schools, hospitals, everybody is negatively impacted by such a work stoppage. That's what we're finding in Labrador West right now, and I'm sure that there are aspects of Gander that are experiencing the same thing as my hon. colleague would say.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do, I think, and I feel the time has come where we need to sit down with both sides and look at legislation that we have in place. We have to respect the collective bargaining process that we now have in place and, again, at this point, we hope – and I'm confident that it will – that once both sides get back together that we can settle this dispute through the collective bargaining process.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm seeing happening to my community, to Labrador West, is very troubling. I find myself right in the middle of it because we have the union, as I said, on the outside. We have the workers on the inside, the non-unionized workforce of ICO, they have to go work – because I've been on both sides of it. I've been on both sides of that picket line, so I know what they're going through. Going through that picket line, whether you're on the outside looking in, or on the inside of that bus looking out, it's very, very stressful and it's something that we need to avoid.

Now, the Third Party referred to the Voisey's Bay situation some years ago when we had an 18-month strike, I think, where they did bring in replacement workers. That was wrong, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I don't agree with replacement workers. I state that categorically, I don't. There's something different about it, though, when that mine is in a remote location and the workers are, say, in a town. You don't have that immediate connection and immediate contact with one versus the other. Voisey's Bay did that for a quite a time until commissioners got involved and there was an inquiry done on the whole thing.

One of the recommendations coming out of that – and I agree with the Third Party – was to have anti-replacement worker legislation. I don't use the word anti-scab because I just don't like it, so I'm going to use replacement.

Anyway, when you got it happening within, or at least the accusations and allegations that it's happening – and some of the allegations, by the way, have been proven wrong. Nevertheless, whether it's happening or it's not, the mere fact that the perception is there that it's happening is enough to cause a terrible, terrible situation within the community.

So what I'd like to see, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have a chance to speak again – and I look forward to the debate that's going occur this evening because I think it's a very healthy debate, it's one that's required and it's one that we need to do. I look forward to the debate from both sides of the House and what actually is being said and where we actually go with this. But I feel that we need to leave this wide open for unions and industry to come back to us and tell us what's required to have a balanced approach to good, strong collective bargaining and good labour relations in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to get up and speak on this private Member's motion today on a very important issue. This issue is very important. The PMR, there's no one here in this House I don't think will be against this. It's something probably needs more substance to it. But in any event, it's a very important issue. It's a serious issue and it's never good when you see a prolonged labour dispute like this and having such an effect on a company town like Lab West is.

I mean, the mine is such an integral part of that community. We, on this side, do certainly wish and encourage government and for this to come to a peaceful end and everything get back to normal. It's very important to the province and to the local economy.

Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with the Member for Lab West. No region's more heavily reliant on a single employer than the people of his district are reliant on IOC. Lab West is one of the shining lights of the mining industry, not just nationally but globally. For decades, the workers at IOC have invested their energy and skill to making this company one of the best iron ore producers in the world. The company has generated huge returns and Lab West has become one of the most prosperous regions in our province.

From time to time over the years, collective bargaining has failed and workers have found themselves on strike. Every time the work stoppage is stressful for workers, their families and everyone else in the community whose prosperity depends on the mine. The bills continue to come in, but not the paycheques.

While the workers walk the picket lines, the union leaders consider their options. In the corporate headquarters, managers are considering their options. What are the companies' goals? How much are they willing to bend? What are the workers' goals? How much are they willing to bend? What are the factors at play? The goals of the owners (inaudible) the state of the market, the state of the industry.

All the while the clock is ticking, the days crossed off the calendar are adding up. When times are good and money is flowing, Labrador West is an amazing place to be. But when things

grind to a halt, a dark cloud hangs over the entire region. I don't envy the Member for Lab West. A strike could happen at any time in any industry affecting any one of our districts, but in your district, with a strike like this, everything comes to a standstill.

It might be tempting to take political shots at the Member opposite at a time like this, but I'm not going to do that. I have too much respect for the men and women and children of Lab West who are watching this debate and really suffering, out of concern for themselves and their region. They want solutions. This resolution is about finding solutions and we plan to support it.

We asked some very pointed questions this week about the situation at IOC. We asked these questions because they need to be asked. People in Lab West are asking those very same questions. In June 2015, just prior to the last election, the leader who is now Premier stood in front of IOC workers and made a commitment. We know he made a commitment because of what was said afterwards.

Lawrence McKay spoke to the gathering after the politicians had spoken, and this is what he said: Sisters and brothers, I want to make one thing clear. We heard from some politicians, a lot of politicians, and I want them to understand very clearly that we are going to be hounding you to do what you just said you were going to do.

That's not me speaking; that's the people of Labrador West speaking. When they hear commitments, they expect commitments to be kept. What commitments was he referring to? He was referring to a commitment made by the leader who will soon be premier. He was talking about another premier, but today he's the one who sits on the eighth floor of Confederation Building.

These words from his own mouth are directed at the person who sits in the Premier's chair. Right now, that person is him. The people of Lab West are echoing this Premier's own words right back at the person who spoke them. Here is what he said: Why is it taking so long for this to be dealt with? We have processes. We have legislation that is in place in our province. All we are asking for is that the processes be respected.

Right now, what I am seeing is a Premier that has decided to step back when it's time to step up. He has not done that. We are asking the Premier right now – the Premier is the one person who can get the company at the table, meet with the union, get this resolved once and for all so that this community can have a great successful future. Premier, step up and help be part of the solution.

Those are the words that the people of Lab West today are echoing back at the Premier. They promised to hound politicians who make commitments and it is the Premier who made these commitments, the commitment to step up, the commitment to get this company at the table, met with the union and get this resolved so the community can have a great, successful future.

With this strike now two months old, what is the Premier doing to live up to his commitment he made to the people of Lab West when he was asking for their support? They supported him then. Where's the support for them now, now that they need it? Is this resolution the support this region needs? Let's look at how this resolution reads because that's all we have before us today, by way of a government solution to the region's crisis.

The resolution calls for several things. First, it calls on the government to begin consultations with unions and employers. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. It's 2018, this government has been in office for three years and the IOC strike has been ongoing now for eight weeks. Why is this resolution calling for government to begin consultation with unions and employers? Why have they not already begun? Why does it take a resolution of the House to get the government to begin consultations with union and employers?

This beginning should have happened long before now, without a resolution to trigger it. The consultation process should be ongoing, constant and an open channel of communication throughout all sectors and communities with workers and employers alike. Why hasn't this been happening?

Second, the resolution calls for these consultations to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process. That, too, is surprising. Labour relations are a long-

standing provincial government responsibility. Every administration takes onto itself the obligation of facilitating and supporting the collective bargaining process so it occurs as smoothly as possible. That is essential to a successful, sustainable economy.

The government administers all sorts of labour relations legislation. The labour division of government has labour relation responsibilities. At one time, the labour relations agency was created to facilitate this. There are other offices and instruments available to government to ensure that the labour relations climate in the province is as healthy as possible.

In fact, section 2(d) of the Charter protects the right to associate to achieve collective goals. It's a fundamental part of our society and the province has a role to play in ensuring the labour relations climate is healthy and balanced.

Third, this resolution states that these measures to support the collective bargaining process should serve to avoid prolonged work stoppages. That should go without saying, Mr. Speaker. Prolonged work stoppages are not a good thing, not for workers, not for employers, not for communities, not for any of us. Finding measures to resolve prolonged work stoppages must be a priority. Finding measures to avoid prolonged work stoppages must also be a priority.

Fourth, this resolution states that these measures to support collective bargaining should protect the rights of both unionized and non-unionized employees. That, again, is fundamental. Workers have the right to organize unions; they have a right to choose not to organize unions. The rights of both kinds of workers must be protected.

Fifth, the resolution states these measures to support collective bargaining should preserve the long-term sustainability of various industries to the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This is fundamental. Our province relies on industries to generate jobs for people, income for people and revenue for our province. Who could disagree with the importance of preserving the long-term sustainability of our industries and benefitting our people? These are (inaudible) aspirations.

That is the sum total of today's resolution from government: Begin consulting with the unions and employers to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process, thereby avoiding prolonged work stoppages while respecting the rights of both unionized and non-unionized employees such that the long-term sustainability of various industries is preserved to the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This all comes back to the word "begin."

Everything here is what every government ought to be doing all the time. The people of Lab West expect their government to be engaged in constructive dialog with workers and companies all the time. In fact, they expect their government to be proactive, to meet with companies and workers to see the problems coming before they occur and find ways to avoid problems and work stoppages before they occur.

Governments have many opportunities to do this; premiers have many opportunities to do this. Premiers and ministers have opportunities to travel the country and the world to meet with employers, investors and governments to talk about ways to bring benefits to our province. They have incredibly talented officials working in government, Mr. Speaker. Officials who pay close attention to markets, to emerging opportunities that we should be chasing and to emerging threats that we need to get out in front of.

Premiers meet with other premiers and prime ministers, governments and ambassadors, corporate leaders, wealthy investors, people all over the world. Premiers and ministers have the responsibility to make the most of these opportunities and try to bring new investment to Newfoundland and Labrador.

If there are changes in the ownership or management of major companies that are already doing business here and, particularly, if there is trouble brewing in the commodity markets where companies trade, then governments ought to be on top of those developments. It ought to be setting up meetings to talk about those challenges and ways to deal with them with the people involved.

The same way a government should be beating the bushes to attract new industries here, it ought to be careful to work with industries that have already come here and nurture those relationships. That doesn't mean closing up to sell our province short, it means being a responsible partner looking for the best interests of the people of this province. It means keeping the lines of communication open, being well-informed in dealing with these enterprises and being a mature partner in economic development as a steward of the people's resources.

The government has an enormous power to shape the local landscape through its tax policies, resource development policies, trade agreements, labour market agreements and so forth. It is how we use those powers that determine how successful this province is going to be.

Even today, many regions of our world are prospering; many regions of our country are prospering. We need our own province to be prospering and not suffering, but that requires leadership that understands the challenges, builds relationships and cultivates opportunities that will bring growth and prosperity to Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the government's job, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time, the government needs to cultivate strong relationships with local communities, workers, unions, councils, small businesses, social enterprises and so forth. It is not just about workers and companies engaged in collective bargaining over there out of reach. You don't get to wash your hands of this. An economy is so much more than workers and companies. There are so many more factors that comes into play. Tax policy is just one of the factors that government controls and can have a huge impact on success.

Those policies cannot be developed down in the basement of the Confederation Building out of touch with the world; they have to be made in collaboration with people outside the building. A government cannot make the best decisions unless it is fully engaged with all sectors of the economy, boots on the ground in every community in this province.

Eight weeks after a strike starts is too late to begin to engage workers and employers on *The Way Forward*. Eight hours after a strike starts is too late to begin. The beginning should start the moment you take government. Open up the channels of communication right from the start and keep them open. Minimize the surprises; minimize the chances of things breaking down. Address conflicts before they spin out of control. Find avenues to resolve disputes before they occur.

One minister spoke yesterday on solutions in search of problems. He spoke of that as being a bad thing. Since when is it a bad thing to avoid problems before they occur? We see a proactive approach as a good thing. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Avoiding a stoppage is a whole lot better than ending it months down the road. What do we do now that the process has broken down and the strike is grinding on? The Premier needs to bring the parties together as he said he would.

The Premier is the one person who can get this company to the table, meet with the union and get this resolved once and for all so that this community can have a great, successful future. Premier, step up and help be part of the solution.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to first congratulate the Member for Labrador West for bringing forward this private Members' resolution today. In a proactive discussion on the floor of the House of Assembly we will be discussing today many elements of labour relations, labour relations regulations and statutes. This is important.

There has already been some criticism that the private Member's resolution is vague, that it is not defined, it's not prescriptive, that it's not preconceived, that all of the measures that Members would like to have in place are not already in place and scripted within the private Member's resolution. I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, that had the Member done so, had the Member provided specific prescription to our

labour relations environment in Newfoundland and Labrador, the opposite would be true, the call would be that there should have been greater consultation. There should have been openness and a possibility for a discussion at the opinion of labour experts, the opinion of labour, the opinion of employers before any final resolution was made.

While there has already been criticism that has been placed, this criticism is easily seen to be unjustified. The very people who suggest that the resolution is not complete would be the very ones who'd be very angry if the resolution were prescriptive in nature and pre-established or preordained what the outcomes should be.

Mr. Speaker, with that as a backdrop, it's important to point out that labour relations regulation, labour relations law, labour relations decisions are an evolving legal context. In fact, just recently the Supreme Court of Canada extended jurisprudence in a case where section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution of Canada, was being reviewed by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Our Supreme Court justices decided that protection for the freedom of association and the right to strike are so important that in one of the Supreme Court's decisions they held that the right to strike is constitutionally protected because it's such a critical role in the meaningful process of collective bargaining.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me put this in a context of when a Legislature decides to restrict the right to strike or to lockout its employees through the imposition of a statutory binding arbitration mechanism. That's really what this is. When you consider what binding arbitration is we are very open minded to all aspects of this but it would be to create a statutory provision, statutory restriction on the right to strike or lockout.

It would be important to recognize that the labour movement understandably and reasonably values the right to strike. If a Legislature were suddenly to come forward and impose a restriction or limitation on the right to strike, vis-à-vis the creation of a binding arbitration process whereby the right to strike would be removed and the ultimate decision would be created by arbitrator or a panel, then of



course there is a potential for a challenge of the constitutionality of that legislation through the Supreme Court based on now existing recent jurisprudence.

It would be fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that not everyone would be fully in agreement with a binding arbitration mechanism. In fact, both parties to a negotiation both labour and employers, value the right and the necessity of the collective bargaining process. Surrendering the collective bargaining process to an outside party is not always met with favour, and understandably so, because the element of control, the element of participation and for ideas to speak on their own face becomes surrogate to the decisions of an arbitrator.

It would be very presumptive of this Legislature to just simply assume there is unanimous consensus or even near unanimous consensus by either employers or employee representatives for binding arbitration. We recognize that in difficult circumstances, in difficult cases, that appetite, that awareness, that appreciation grows.

Clearly, D-J Composites, the situation, the lockout at D-J Composites being somewhat of a protracted strike – lockout, sorry – this is one of those times when you can clearly see where the frustration level grows and people seek an answer. But to make the suggestion that the labour movement of Canada is in full favour of binding arbitration and prepared to surrender the text, the wording, the conditions of invoking binding arbitration, should be just simply handed to the Legislature to discuss and decide by themselves, would be ridiculous.

The Member's motion, the resolution that we have before us today, which has been suggested is vague and inappropriate because it's not prescriptive and completely defined so that there's one prescription and one prescription only, and that prescription is defined exclusively by the Member for Labrador West, I think the very critics of that notion, of that PMR, would be the critics if it were prescriptive.

We do need to reach out to experts and find what the common level of understanding and information that's available out there. We do need to hear from labour experts but, as well,

employers, before this Legislature makes any final decision and determination on any draft. That is the responsible thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, we've done this before. In fact, the former administration did have a suite of changes to the *Labour Relations Act*, some of which, after being invoked and enacted, were revoked. So you can make a mistake with this. You can err.

When you consider the importance of strong labour relations to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, to each and every one of us and to the security of our families, this is something that should be done very thoughtfully. It should not be done recklessly, nor should it be assumed that any one Member from this side or from that side has a permanent and best solution.

Let me be clear, this is what has been proposed. The text of the private Member's resolution that we discuss today, or the debate or the speeches, the information we convey to each other will likely include elements of what the *Labour Relations Act* could include and what the elements of labour relations collective bargaining should include.

The resolution on the floor of the House of Assembly today is whether or not there should be a consultation, whether or not we should ask those experts, whether or not we should ask members of the labour community and the employer community, and those that could guide this Legislature to a best result.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, not only we on this side of the House fully endorses this resolution but we're asking the other side to as well. If they fail to do so, what they're really saying is they are granting the right, they're granting the opportunity and they will be bound to the right of the Member for Labrador West to decide what the outcome will be. If they don't like that kind of binding arbitration that they would presumably grant to the Member for Labrador West, then obviously they have found fault with the element of binding arbitration.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we need to have a discussion about replacement workers. We need to have a discussion about binding arbitration.

We need to have a discussion about other elements of labour relations conduct. We have to protect the right to strike and to lock out. We have to recognize that it is a Charter right. We have to recognize that the Supreme Court of Canada has enforced or emboldened the right to strike and to lock out, and the right to collective bargaining in particular, as a Charter right, as a constitutional right. We have to be very mindful, Mr. Speaker, that any attempt to reduce or nullify that right – even if it is potentially well-intentioned – can infringe upon a Charter right and may not necessarily meet with favour of those who we would be proposing to support. Because if a situation occurred where a future labour relations regime were to invoke a binding arbitration conclusion in advance of the will of either of the parties, then the parties could challenge the decision and challenge the constitutionality of the very statute on which it was based as being in violation, as being in contradiction to section 2 of the Charter.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, it is so, so important for us to get this right and to listen to the Member for Labrador West and his wise counsel that he is not prepared to invoke a full prescription of measures at this point in time. He is prepared to listen to the Legislature, to the will of the House, to invoke a consultation – to ask government to invoke a consultation that includes all sides and experts.

In a few minutes I would suspect we'll hear Members from the other side who will be critical of the content of the motion because what they really wanted was for the Member for Labrador West to provide all of the answers, and what they're suggesting when they say that is that they would abide by those answers. They would surrender their own capacity to guide the discussion. They would surrender to the binding arbitration that will be determined by the Member for Labrador West.

I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that's what would ever be intended by the Member for Labrador West. He is too wise, too understanding of the processes that we all engage in, the importance of the House; but, most importantly, the importance of getting this right, because the people that he represents, the hard-working workers of Labrador West and the industry that

supports our economy, is too valuable to him to make such a mistake.

So I support and applaud the Member for Labrador West. He is acting in good faith and acting appropriately and asking the counsel of the Legislature to help guide this government and make a wise decision.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to stand as we debate the private Member's resolution that has been put forward by my colleague from Labrador West and seconded by the colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port.

While I've heard some debate about it perhaps not having the teeth that it may need, I have to agree with the principle that we can't pigeonhole ourselves. If we're going to be inclusive and find solutions here, we've got to use the process to ensure before we make commitments of certain things, we engage the right people. We engage the industry, we engage workers who are unionized and non-unionized, those within the companies, the labour unions and these types of things to have that proper dialogue.

So I do appreciate the resolution put forward. I've said this every time I get up to speak. I will start the way I'm going to end by saying I wholeheartedly support it and will be voting for that as part of that. I do have a number of concerns, not specifically about the resolution put forward but the whole process that's happening in our province right now in the labour unions, the negotiations and strikes that we have here.

I have some real concerns. I have concerns about what's happening in Labrador because, as we know, history has it, disputes of that size, five, six, seven, maybe into the eighth week you normally get a resolution. By that time, both who've entrenched themselves either get arbitration, get a conciliator to sit down, to come

to a medium and come up with a process to put things in place.

As we go in beyond the eighth week, it's concerning. Because we see the value of what goes on with the iron ore mine in Labrador, the value it has to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it's also a part of our history and we all have connections in some way, shape or form. When the economies are bad in particular areas, the fishery and these types of things, or a bad season in tourism, we can always rely on the mining industry. One of the key areas around there is in Labrador.

When we have a dispute up there, it has an impact on everybody, but it's heartfelt. For somebody like myself who stood on a picket line three times in their career, I know the impact it has. I know how you worry: Is this going to go a day, a week, a month? Is it going to go a year? You worry about your bills. You worry about the impact on your family. You worry about the impact it has on your career. Because, as the time goes, you had plans in your career to move to different levels or get different levels of experience and training, it has an impact.

So having that impact on people who are in places where they have commitments – unfortunately, we all realize because the economy was so robust in Labrador a couple of years ago, people got into some heavy commitments financially in mortgages and that. Now, all of a sudden, in some cases where there are two in family who are reliant on the mine and IOC for an income, and now they are just getting strike pay, that's having a major impact.

While you give credit to – most financial institutions understand strikes end at some time, that people will get back to a norm. They, themselves, also realize that they have expenditures out there and they need to be able to ensure that people are going to be able to be fluent and get it back.

We need to ensure that all those involved in processes like this have a stake in what is being done and support that we're going to get to an outcome, and we're going to get an outcome that works for everybody. So, in these cases, there are some challenges, no doubt.

I support the fact here that government needs to take a major stake in what's going on here. We do have labour laws here. We do have a department or a division that deals with that. We do have certain rights and responsibilities as a government to ensure that labour negotiations and labour disputes are dealt with in a timely fashion. And I know you don't want to get heavy-handed, because we don't encourage that in any way, shape or form in anywhere; but, at times, people have to be made accountable. Sometimes people have to be directed in a direction that gets to a solution, and that's what I see is being proposed here.

It's being proposed here that government immediately – and while I say it says urge government, but to me, if I'm going to urge somebody to do something, I'm saying let's do it now. Let's not wait; let's not put it off. Let's not think about it; let's do it. And while we're doing it, we can do it right by making sure we have the right people who have the ability to come up with solutions that work for people. It's disheartening when you look at what's happening in Gander with D-J Composites. We're going into the second year where people are on strike, with no indication that there's even any way of resolving this. Yet, we have again labour laws. We have a department, we've brought in people to negotiate, there's been arbitration, there have been discussions and there have even been recommendations.

That becomes concerning, because at the end of the day somebody has to be made accountable. And in this case – and I'm not bashing the company in this case. But it's alarming that the company has violated on two occasions that we know of issues and have been identified that they haven't followed the labour laws, yet they're not made accountable.

What worries me about that, it's not just these two incidents that are on the go – this is a bigger picture here. It's industry. It's about businesses who do business here, about those we're going to try to attract. It's also about those who are unionized and non-unionized, knowing that there has to be a proper approach. People have to have privileges and rights, but they also have to have responsibilities.

Labour unions have responsibilities, non-unionized employees have responsibilities but the employers have responsibilities. With those responsibilities comes a commitment that you're going to follow the proper laws of the land and you're going to do what's in the best interest of all involved. And that's what worries me about what's happened out in Gander, that we haven't made them accountable, even though it's been identified and they've been found guilty, for want of a better phrase, of not following the laws that we have of the land that protects everybody involved as employers and employees.

That's disheartening here, and I think we need to be a little bit more assertive when we say this is what you need to follow. Here are the responsibilities you have. You have privileges and you have rights and we're going to respect those and we're going to protect those, but under responsibilities, if you violate a certain thing, you're made accountable. We don't chastise you forever and a day, but we make you accountable. You rectify that, then we go back to having a good working relationship and we move to the next level.

We need to get a little bit more assertive on that. I don't know if that's because we need to change legislation or we need to show the companies coming in here that these are the laws that need to be followed, or do we set an example as part of what we do. There are certain things that need to be done as we progress this.

While my colleagues here have talked about urging government to do things, my philosophy is let's immediately set a process. I'm not saying let's define it, etched in stone. I agree, the minister responsible had noted that you don't want to set this phase process that it can't change and this is the only way it can proceed and then we find out it doesn't work for all agencies or all organizations.

I worked with the labour unions for a period of time. I was part of a negotiation that realized things change as you go through it. It changes for company to company. While laws and regulations are processes you follow and they're guidelines in certain areas – because certain employers, certain companies, certain groups of employees may have a different nuance on how

they get to a solution to the challenges they have in labour negotiations. So I respect that and I think it can't be just black and white. There has to be some grey areas there that you come to a consensus.

Through that consensus process, we do have and we've always adopted – conciliation has always been one. Going to arbitration has always been processes there, but they only work if both sides agree that the recommendations that are going to be put forward are the ones you live by. You may not always like the outcomes. You may have to grin and bear it sometimes, or you may have to then go back and find another approach to argue why things need to be changed so that they're made fairer. That becomes the even process in any labour negotiations.

The concerns we have here, and what I know is being brought forward, is that at the end of the day if there is not a desire for some reason by a company or a labour union or a group of employees to get at the table, come up with a workable solution, then we have a challenge, because it's not only the impact on those individuals. In some cases it's 99 per cent of the individuals who have very little input who get affected the most, because it's labour union leaders.

It could be other people who are chairs of a committee. It could be the company's management who are the ones who are making these decisions that impact other people's lives and may be making them not in good faith for whatever reason. Sometimes it's personality conflicts. Sometimes it's a little bit of payback, depending what the rationale is. So we all should be following standard operational procedures and respectful manners of how we negotiate.

As we get to discussing this, I like this, but the thing that I think we need to be cognizant of – and I mentioned in the House and we had a debate the other day – PMRs, unfortunately, are not binding. If there was a PMR here that all agreed to and we had open debate, there should be logistically some point that that becomes something that has some meat to it and can be taken to the next level.

Maybe it goes to the ministry responsible and it becomes legislation within 12 months. I don't

know. They're things I've only been thinking about in the last number of weeks, about how we make this more efficient in what we do, and because what we do in this House is reflective of what our citizens tell us.

The Member for Labrador West, I know what he's presenting here. He's presenting something that's reflective of what he's hearing on the streets. He's seeing the impact it's having on the citizens he represents. He understands the fear of what impact it may have on the company and its markets and the longevity. Just as we're making some inroads in Labrador of getting some of the other things moving, particularly in Labrador West, you might now have another black eye that you don't want because we can't come to a resolution on something that is very efficient when it comes to our reputation.

We've got great workers up there. We had a great mine that's been operational. We've been providing great services. The steel products that are produced by the iron ore that's mined up there are second to none. So we've had that. We've had a market.

As a matter of fact, we've had a market where other companies from outside Canada are willing to come in and invest tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars to take it to the next level. When we get to that point, the one thing no company wants, and no employee wants, is about not having good labour relations and labour actions.

The other big challenge here is the impact it has on those who don't work directly for the mine or have no direct stake into receiving a paycheque from the mine company, but are those businesses, those small operations, those people who rely on the income that the miners and the managers and all the support people who work for the mine have. That has a major impact on their survival.

I read an article only recently about the fact that when they get to – I think one of the employers' council said at week 10 small companies have to decide cutting back hours, laying off staff, reducing services. That has an impact.

The other fears you have when you're on strike – and I've been there – is your health insurance.

What impact does that have? You've got a family, you've got issues that you need, there are drugs you need, there are treatments you may need. There's a bigger issue than just a dispute between a union and an employer, or a non-union group and an employer. There are all the other fallout effects that it has on our society. Urging government is the common sense thing because we have a vested interest. Somebody's got to support our citizens.

We have a responsibility, that if our citizens are in peril we must step up and help them out. Well, you know what? We've got a lot of challenges in this province, so we'd prefer to be able to help other citizens who can't help themselves. If we had the labour disputes taken care of and those employees who want to be back to work are back doing what they were doing before – very diligently providing services and products, earning money, paying taxes, being productive in society and in their communities and the communities and them benefiting from that. When that breaks down, we've got a challenge.

Bringing this PMR forward, I would hope, at least brings a bit more light that we in the House of Assembly have to be a little bit more assertive. Urging is fine, and that's – I take urging as an assertive word, to say we've got to do something and we've got to do it immediately.

So using that word, I think will now send a message. We'll all, I would think, be supporting that. I know we will, being the Official Opposition, would give an indication to whatever the department can do, responsible – whatever the Premier could do, and I know the Premier has some rights – and we've had this debate earlier the week – and some responsibilities to foster moving things a lot quicker, as part of that.

If we all come to an understanding and an agreement that we're going to do this, this is going to urge immediate solutions or contexts, discussions, engagement – so that D-J Composites get back to work and start earning a decent income again; that the company's reputation gets back on an even keel; that the products get produced out there; that people in Gander are not on the edge of whether or not

that company's going to stay and survive out there. The same way in our mining industry, particularly in Labrador.

Again, I keep reiterating this. It's a positive what's happened just in the last week over there on another side; yet, now we're challenged with something else. So we need to make sure – whatever it is we can do in this house. Whatever it is. Sometimes it's to use the influence we have; sometimes it's to use the legal routes we have; sometimes it's to use our political influence to ensure that what we do works for citizens and solves the issues.

We all know that 99 per cent of the work we do is we're asked to try to intervene to solve an issue for a constituent. Well, do you know what? We're being asked in the House of Assembly to solve an issue for all constituents. Because everybody who is in the workforce are either unionized or non-unionized, and that's part of that. We know every business out there would like government to have a fluent process where they know they can operate properly. If there's a dispute with their employees, that it can be resolved without any major disruption to what they do as a company.

So I just want to end, Mr. Speaker, by again thanking the Members for bringing this forward and knowing that we will be strongly urging everybody to vote for this resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. FINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly great to take a few moments here this afternoon to debate the private Member's resolution before the floor of the House of Assembly today, the motion being introduced by the Member for Labrador West and myself, as the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, to second this motion. It's certainly great to hear the comments from the Members of the Opposition and it sounds like they are in full support of this motion today.

The minister responsible for Fisheries and Land Resources, formerly responsible for Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, spoke very eloquently today and certainly has in his previous capacity a great understanding of this motion and what the intent of the motion is.

I am just going to read into the record once again, Mr. Speaker, and primarily so I can highlight the spirit and intent of the motion, as I anticipate comments from Members of the Third Party shortly after I adjourn my portion of the debate.

The motion as it stands states: "BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to begin consultations with unions and employers to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process thereby avoiding prolonged work stoppages while respecting the rights of both unionized and non-unionized employees such that the long-term sustainability of various industries is preserved to the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians."

Mr. Speaker, some of the key words in that resolution – and I really wish to highlight them because there was some reference from the Leader of the Opposition on a private Member's resolution and the fact that it primarily is a non-binding type of resolution.

The spirit of this motion this afternoon is that we're asking government, and we're asking all Members on the floor of this House of Assembly, to begin consultations with unions and employers to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process.

Now, if measures are identified this afternoon to support the collective bargaining process, well then, that's certainly a bonus, absolutely. If any Member of this Legislature who wishes to partake in debate this afternoon can identify some measures that would support the collective bargaining process then by all means, we on the government side are all ears to anything that may be identified.

The primary intent and the spirit of this motion is so that we're asking for some consultations. The reason the Member for Labrador West is

seeking this motion and urging our government to consider this motion is, of course, as we know, due to the strike right now in Labrador with IOC and the Local 5795, I believe is it, to the Member for Labrador West.

Between the union right now and the company, we have a strike that's been ongoing just over seven weeks. This strike is affecting some 1,300 employees, 1,300 workers, Mr. Speaker. What's also being affected, of course, in addition to the workers, is the company. The company's ability, their productivity, their profit margins are being affected and, with that, Mr. Speaker, we have a direct subsequent impact on the municipality, on the region as a whole. Then more importantly for us as legislators and Members in this House of Assembly, we actually have a direct impact on the royalties that we receive through mining, which affect, ultimately, our provincial Treasury.

So anytime we see any type of work stoppage, any type of strike, there's a direct impact on a number of players and on a number of fronts.

Today, we're asking our government to consider: How can we rectify these types of situations? This strike is the most recent strike that's happened in our province right now. As the Members of the Opposition have pointed out, we're also seeing a strike right now that has been ongoing for well over a year in Gander, the community of Gander with the company D-J Composites and their union as well. Then, most recently, prior to that strike, the other most recent strike that has impacted our province is the strike that happened in Lower Cove, which is situated on the Port au Port Peninsula, the district which I'm so fortunate to represent.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall during that strike, myself and you actually took some time to go meet with both the employer and the employees. We met with the employees on the picket line to listen to them and hear their concerns and we also spent some time to sit down and meet with the employer. We further actually sat down with some of the representatives and the leaders of the union representing that group.

In the last just two-and-one-half years alone, we've now had our third strike that is impacting companies, employees, regions and the results

on our provincial Treasury. Today, we're looking at urging our government to begin consultations to see if we can't rectify and find better ways to do business when it comes to this.

The Member for Labrador West had suggested in his opening remarks, identified some of the key stakeholders that we should be engaging conversations with. He stated specifically the Federation of Labour should be someone we could consult with. Naturally, we should consult with the Federation of Labour but also various labour unions and the Employers' Council.

The Employer's Council of Newfoundland and Labrador represents a wide-ranging group of employers. We have various Boards of Trade that could be engaged in this type of dialogue, various Chambers of Commerce, of course, industry, and in this particular case, the steel industry, as well as government. We're certainly consulting with those within government and consulting with those within our own labour relations agency as well.

Mr. Speaker, again, around the primary spirit and intent of the motion, and I wanted to reiterate that, the Member for CBS delivered a speech, I believe a prepared speech, and he highlighted some key points that he said were fundamental to our government and were fundamental to all governments. He said the motion is talking about identifying measures which our government already have the responsibility of. He's suggesting that it's our government's responsibility to already be doing this work and finding measures to fix this problem should go without saying.

Again, we understand that government has a role to play, and we understand that the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour has a role to play, but that's why we have an independent Labour Relations Board. So what we're saying is we should be going out to these groups that I just mentioned to seek some input around how we can find ways to support a better collective bargaining process, but in doing so, while also protecting the rights of both the unionized employees and non-unionized employees and protecting the rights of the business as well.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the effects of this strike are certainly well-known and have been going on for just over seven weeks right now.

Some of the things that I can appreciate and I suspect we'll hear, particularly given Question Period today in which the Leader of the Third Party had asked what we should do around considering some legislation for anti-replacement workers to this effect. I can appreciate the opinion from the Leader of the Third Party and I'm sure we'll hear from her shortly.

On that note, in respecting everyone's opinion, in order to look at any type of anti-replacement worker legislation, we can only look across other jurisdictions in this country, as to what other jurisdictions are doing right now. Currently, we only have anti-replacement legislation in British Columbia and Quebec.

I'm just going to talk a little bit about what that looks like there and how that has some impact on those provinces. I'm also just going to take a quick moment to talk about some of the reasons why others are against this type of legislation. I just want to highlight both the for and against because I think, at the end of the day, what we're suggesting here is we need to find some type of balance that does not involve some drastic sweeping legislation that is only being done in two provinces, and, of course, a balance is going to be key to recognizing how we can move forward with the collective bargaining process and supporting both companies and unions in this process.

So, as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, currently there's anti-replacement legislation in British Columbia and Quebec. BC's laws came into effect in 1993 and the Quebec legislation came in, in 1978. Banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout has some several noted negative economic consequences. This has been noted through a variety of studies.

One study in particular that myself and the Member for Labrador West reviewed prior to debate today is one that came from the Fraser Institute. I don't think I need to take any great length of time to elaborate on some of the good work that comes from the Fraser Institute as a

well-respected institute providing this type of information. The two provinces – and I'll quote – that currently ban temporary replacement workers, Quebec and British Columbia, experienced the greatest loss in per days per 1,000 workers over an eight year period from 2008 to 2016. “Quebec had 1,100 person-days lost per 1,000 workers; in British Columbia it was 798.”

“In comparison, the person-days lost per 1,000 workers in the three provinces with the lowest losses are 163 in Nova Scotia, 89 in Alberta, and 32 in Prince Edward Island.” Essentially, Mr. Speaker, this is just pointing to the fact that these types of work stoppages that banned temporary replacement workers have seemed to have had a tremendous negative impact on those areas. In particular, it has led to some decreased investment, it discourages existing businesses from investment, it discourages outside firms and companies from coming in to invest and it actually provides a bit of an advantage for unions over the employers. That's just a little bit in that regard with respect to reasons why it has had some negative impacts in terms of anti-replacement worker legislation.

In addition, arguments for the anti-replacement worker legislation, the only leverage unions have are going to be their employees. So if work can't get done through replacement workers, the unions are kind of left powerless in cases of lockouts. Supporters of anti-replacement legislation will argue that jurisdictions that use this have fewer workdays as I've just mentioned. Others argue this is an attack on the rights of business owners to operate a business freely. We live in a free country, Mr. Speaker, and businesses have the right to operate freely.

Those are just two small examples, but I don't need to go into too great specifics; again, just highlighting the understanding that we, as a government, are aware of both reasons for anti-replacement worker legislation and against. But the intent and the spirit of this motion today was to recognize it's an important conversation to have in our Legislature. It's currently the situation which prompted the Member to bring it forward as having a detrimental impact on the region he represents, as I said, and the province as a whole.



We're looking to have this conversation to identify measures in ways we can support the collective bargaining process. I think that's what the intent of a private Member's resolution is by my understanding, Mr. Speaker, any resolution that has been brought forward on a Wednesday afternoon in this House, being Private Members' Day.

Yes, we are aware. As the leader of the Opposition indicated, it is non-binding. He said if this is non-binding, we'd like to see action sooner. I would suggest to the leader of the Opposition if he's in consultation with the Leader of the PC Party and they see fit ways to begin consultations on their own or see it fit to have ways for us, as a government, to begin consultations and want to have influence on that process, then by all means, we are all ears. The intent today was to bring it into the public light, to discuss it on the public record and to allow the Member for Labrador West to express his deep concern for the workers in this case, for the company in this case and for all of the citizens he represents in the District of Labrador West.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly very proud to stand here today as a seconder to the motion. I certainly appreciate where the Member is coming from. Again, it looks like we have support from the Members of the PC Party in Opposition. I'll certainly look forward to comments from the Leader of the Third Party. Then, in particular, I certainly look forward to hearing the Member for Labrador West conclude his closing remarks as we conclude debate before the afternoon ends.

With that, Mr. Speaker, my full support is behind the spirit and intent of this private Member's resolution today. I thank the Member for Labrador West for bringing it in.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to this private Member's motion. I've been sitting here listening to a lot of things being said by the government side of the House, especially the first two speakers, which really go around in circles about the issues that we're concerned about. It really put the whole situation in a bit of a fog.

I want to read the resolution that we're dealing with here today: "... that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to begin consultations with unions and employers to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process thereby avoiding" –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS. MICHAEL:** – "prolonged work stoppages while respecting the rights of both the unionized and non-unionized employees such that the long-term sustainability of various industries is preserved to the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians."

I point out to the Member for Labrador West, and I point out to everybody else in the House, that we have a *Labour Relations Act*. In that *Labour Relations Act* there's a whole process. You start with collective bargaining, sitting at the table and starting the negotiations. If that process becomes difficult, you move into looking for a conciliation officer; the parties go to the minister and you get a conciliation officer. A conciliation officer could lead to the formation of a consolidation board. The board has all kinds of powers, the power to subpoena witnesses, to subpoena documents, et cetera.

In both cases recommendations get made to the minister. If the conciliation board doesn't get anywhere you can have a mediator. That's also in the *Labour Relations Act*. All of this is the process that's in place. If there's anything else that needs to be done in that process, I know the labour movement is waiting – and have been waiting for a long time – to sit down with the government to look at the *Labour Relations Act* and deal with the whole *Labour Relations Act* because there's so much in it that needs changing.

This is why we talked about the motion that's here today as being rather vague. It's skirting around issues and not really naming an issue. If the issue we're talking about here today is the issue in particular of D-J Composites, who are out there in Gander with people locked out for 17 months and it's been seen that nothing else is going to work, then why isn't government listening to what the union has said to them. The union has called for binding arbitration. They have said: We're not for binding arbitration as a normal part of the process; however, in a situation like this we are saying it looks like it's the only thing that can work.

It's not me standing and saying this, it's the union. It's wrong for the government side of the House to act as if they don't know that was said by them. They've seen the letters that went in from the union. They received the letters. They know the union has said that.

What I want to speak to and to remind the other side of the House about is what happened in 2011 when we had the Vale strike in Labrador – again, in Labrador – by another multi-national corporation who kept their workers out for 18 months, the Voisey's Bay workers. Because of that, the government set up a commission and this government, the people on the other side of the House, keep refusing to pay attention to what the commission said. It's maddening for me that they are refusing to pay attention to the Roil commission and what the recommendation of the Roil commission was.

The report talked about the fact that we were in a dangerous situation now in the province because we had multi-national corporations who were moving in who did not value our values with regard to workers' rights and with regard to labour relations. That we have to pay attention to that.

There was a very, very important recommendation – and I'm going to read it and put it in the record because they don't seem to have read it. It was recommendation 5. "The Commission recommends that Government seek to amend the *Labour Relations Act* to provide a process for the imposition of a collective agreement in the following circumstances when: (a) one of the employer or the bargaining agent makes application; and (b) the applicant shall

have been found by the Labour Relations Board to have bargained in good faith; and (c) all of the conditions precedent to a strike or lockout have been met; (d) it is apparent that strike and/or lockout mechanisms have been ineffective in bringing about resolution of the dispute; (e) the Labour Relations Board is satisfied that the collective bargaining process has failed; and (f) the public interest requires the imposition of a collective agreement.

"Once such an application is successful, the terms of the new collective agreement should still be set out by the parties themselves, if they are able or, failing success, by an independent third party.

"The Commission further recommends that Government seek to amend the *Labour Relations Act* to provide that, once an application is successful in establishing that the public interest requires the imposition of a collective agreement, the following steps should be taken: "(a) the employer and the bargaining agent shall a further 30 days in which to reach a collective agreement; (b) failing agreement, the Labour Relations Board shall refer the dispute to a three-person arbitration panel appointed by the Board to settle the terms of a collective agreement between the employer and the bargaining agent; (c) the arbitration panel shall have the powers of a conciliation board under the *Act*; and (d) the panel's decision on the collective agreement shall be binding on the parties for a period of not less than one year."

The labour movement accepted that recommendation. They approved of that recommendation, not because they're just seeking to have binding arbitration but if you come to a situation that's absolutely impossible – and I would say Gander right now is absolutely impossible – then you bring in binding arbitration. I really question some of the comments that were made with regard to workers' rights and the constitution, et cetera, et cetera. That was all clouds that we would be putting on to try to get away from what the reality is here.

So let's be clear, this is not against the labour movement, what I'm saying. I'm saying what the labour movement has said in these situations this has to happen; they're asking for it. Now,

are we at that point in Labrador West? I don't think so. We're not at that point. So we're not talking about Labrador West; we're talking about the principle.

The Member for Lab West did point out that the two situations in the province have sort of instigated his Member's statement – I understand that, but in the concern that I have around binding arbitration, it's the Gander situation that I'm talking about. I want to make that very clear.

When I look at the motion that's here, there are things in it that I can't say that I don't want you to have consultations with unions and employers to identify measures that would support the collective bargaining process. That needs to happen, but that's the review of the *Labour Relations Act* that should be happening. And if we're talking about trying to deal with the present situation in Gander, in particular, then this is not going to that. This will take much too long. We need something done now, and doing something now would be bringing in binding arbitration, as the workers themselves and their union have asked for.

It's very disingenuous what some of the speakers are saying here in the House. I cannot agree with everything that's in motion. I can agree with the spirit of most of it. So, Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment that I want to make to the motion.

I move, seconded by the Member for St. John's Centre, that the words "both the unionized and non-unionized" be removed from the motion.

**MR. SPEAKER (Warr):** Order, please!

The House will recess while we review the proposed amendment.

This House is in recess.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

After reviewing the amendment, it is said to be in order.

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

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

I would like to say that I'm glad it is, especially because the Member for Labrador West has told me that he has no problem with the amendment. It does not take away from the spirit of what he's saying and you obviously don't think it takes away from the spirit either.

I'd like to use my last minutes to speak again to the issues with the regard to labour relations. I'd like to point out again – focusing on Gander at the moment – that the Member for St. John's Centre, on behalf of our party as Leader, and the leader before her, Earle McCurdy as well, has spent time with the workers in Gander. Why they are still out on that – accepting being there. They're locked out but they could walk away. Why they're still there and still considering themselves workers for that company is the issue of their rights, workers' rights and the rights that are being eroded.

That's the problem. That was the problem up in Voisey's Bay as well. There are rights that are being eroded and these multi-national corporations do not understand. They don't have the same understanding of our labour relations climate, our culture in Canada. That's happening also in Lab West. Some of the things that IOC is going after are things that these workers have gained in the past. They do not want to give up – and shouldn't be giving up – things that have been gained in the past. So the whole thing of the erosion of the workers' rights is really the major issue.

This was something that the Roil commission talked about in great detail, that Vale – because it was Vale at that time for that strike – was in fact taking away rights and benefits of Canadian workers and imposing a labour relations regime, more typical of an undeveloped country. Roil said it very clearly in his report. He also pointed out that the traditional tool of moral suasion that a government might use to bring parties to end their labour dispute would have less effect on a large multi-national corporation than it would have on a local company.

They explained that because some of these corporations have annual budgets larger than those of a province. They can keep one of their operations closed and ramp up production somewhere else to make up for it. These are all the points that are in Roil's report.

He also noted that although unions can't access funds from national networks to support a local prolonged labour dispute, which is what is happening in Gander and is happening in Lab West as well. Their economic strength doesn't match the multinational corporation in terms of holding out. I think that's the issue. It isn't two equal people on a see-saw. That's not what it is.

One of the few rights that the workers have that is supposed to give them some strength when negotiations break down is being able to be on strike. That's one of the things they have, and it's supposed to cause the company pain so that the company will come to the table and end the strike.

If the companies have the power that these multinationals have and if, like D-J Composites, they're using workers inside that are replacing the workers outside, they're doing it in very fuzzy means there in Gander. They are. They're creating new titles for a job and hiring people. They're still doing the work of the people who've been locked out, but they're saying they're not replacement workers because they're not replacing the job with the same title. Well, we all know what that is. That's a game.

The panel called for the protection of Canadian labour relations values and warned about the negative impact of the multinational corporations on labour relations and collective bargaining. That's why Roil did recommendation 5. The panel recommended that government re-examine the mechanisms by which it facilitates collective bargaining to take into account the need to ensure that such corporations respond to Canadian labour relations values and the relative economic weight of the parties and the collective bargaining relationship.

I would hope that in sitting down with unions and employers, as the Member for Labrador West is suggesting, that the government would use the intent of what Roil said in what I just

read out. That should be what the intent should be in sitting down, recognizing we have an unequal situation here and being forthright with the companies. D-J Composites is not suffering. They're not suffering at all. So there has to be complete open, straight talk about what they're doing, and that's what has to happen.

If government goes in thinking: Oh, we have two groups here who are equal with each other and they're just not playing ball. That's not what it is. D-J Composites is getting away with locking workers out for 17 months. I hope to heavens we're not going to see Labrador West, the workers out on a picket line for that long. I hope that's not going to happen.

The Roil commission also recommended that the *Labour Relations Act*, and this is what the recommendation was about, so I'll read it again: Be changed to allow the Labour Relations Board to set up a binding arbitration panel to settle disputes where collective bargaining has truly failed and the strike lockout provision has proved ineffective.

I urge the government, if they are going to do what they're suggesting in this private Member's motion, that they do it based on the spirit of what Roil found in doing the inquiry into what happened in Labrador.

Roil also talked about replacement workers but didn't make a recommendation, but he did point out how replacement workers really gives the company an advantage over the workers and denies their power when they're striking.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have finished.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her speaking time has expired.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

**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 minutes. I do thank the Member for giving me the opportunity

to say a couple of words and to show my support for this private Member's motion.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Amended motion.

**MR. LANE:** Well, okay, amended motion my colleague says. I had no problem with either motion, but I do understand why the Member made the amendment and I respect that. I supported both motions and I support the spirit of what's being brought forward here.

I heard the term disingenuous used somewhere throughout the speech and I would say I don't find it that way at all. If I was the Member for Labrador West and I had workers and an industry that the town depended on the way it did and had all those people affected, whether it be directly or indirectly and the businesses and everyone in that community, I would be doing the types of things that he is doing here today bringing attention to those issues. If nothing else, at least it brings attention here in this House of Assembly, attention publicly to the issues that are occurring up there.

Certainly, we all hope that cooler heads prevail, that they get back to the table and iron out an agreement for the workers up there in Labrador West and they can all get back to work. That's really what I think this is all about. I think that was his intention. I won't put words in his mouth, but it wasn't really about D-J Composites – not that I'm sure he's concerned like we all are about that situation as well. I think it was more about the people in his community, and I support him on that.

With that said, though, I will agree with the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi in terms of what she said about that Roil commission and so on, the recommendations. I would tend to agree with what's in that report, that we really do need to look at the *Labour Relations Act* and do a review of the *Labour Relations Act* with stakeholders on both sides, the employer side and the labour side to see if we can make some improvements to it.

There is a process currently in place, as the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi already talked about, about going through the stages. Then, of course, you can have conciliation and mediation and all those things, and a conciliation

board and so on. As she said and as indicated in that Roil commission, we –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. LANE:** – if you get to a point, I think it's important that if you get to a point –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his speaking time has expired.

**MR. LANE:** Thanks.

Anyway, you have my support.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LETTO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands getting up. I think he thought he had more time than he actually did. Anyway, I appreciate his remarks.

What we've seen here today is a great discussion. I'm very pleased that I see support from all sides of the House on this important PMR today. You know what? The Member for CBS had some good comments and very supportive comments, the fact around it's a very serious issue that we have in Lab West. That's the one he referred to and Lab West is a great place, I couldn't agree with him more. The situation we have there today is certainly not helping our situation.

What he said about the Premier being there – the Premier was there and provided his support. He continues to do so, by the way, because anything that's happening between myself and a union and the company, the Premier is certainly well involved in it. We're trying to make the collective bargaining process that we have in place, we're trying to make it work, but as I've said so many times and I'll say it again before I sit down, I'm sure, that in order for a collective bargaining process to work we have to get people talking.

I also thank the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and his remarks, of course, the importance of a strong labour legislation. That is very important. It was brought up by other Members as well, that it's time to look at the *Labour Relations Act*. Well, you know what? That's what this consultation is all about. Maybe that's what will come back from consultations, and maybe that's what we need, to look at the *Labour Relations Act* and to strengthen the act to avoid these long work stoppages.

The Opposition Leader, as well, I appreciate his remarks and using the process, I think he was fully supportive of the consultation process and the need to consult with both sides – with both union and industry. One thing he said that I thought was very important. Even though, where we are today, all sides need to follow the laws of the land, and that's so true.

I'm certainly not suggesting, at this point, that anybody is not following the laws of the land, the labour laws that we have in place, but it's very important for the integrity of the communities. Because no matter what happens in this dispute, we all need and the people who are on strike need a place of employment to go back to. That place of employment needs to be sustainable; it needs to be there for the long haul.

Yes, there are some disagreements that we have in place right now. I'm sure – I'm confident that in very short order, I hope that these differences will be resolved and we will reach an agreement that will benefit both sides of the argument and that these workers can get back to work and do what we do best.

He referred to – and he's totally right again – we have a superior product that we produce in Lab West through the Iron Ore Company and the ore of the Labrador Trough. It's a product that's becoming more valuable every day on the world market because of the environmental issues, especially in China. They're looking for a more refined product to use in their smelters, and we have that. But unless we're in a position to produce it, we're not getting the benefit from it.

The impacts on businesses and families – that's my point, that this work stoppage that we see and the accusations and the allegations that are

going around, it's really tearing the community apart. Everybody is suffering for that. Every man, woman and child in Labrador West is feeling the negative impact of this work stoppage.

I also thank the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port who seconded the motion. I think he did a good job of making the fact that we need a balanced approach to this. I know the Members of the Third Party also mentioned that. Right now, there seems to be an imbalance, but we have to be careful that we don't swing the pendulum too far. That's why we need to consult. That's why we need to involve all aspects of labour. Whether it's the union or the employer, they all play a role. But we have to have a system in place that both sides can be sustainable. The pros and cons of certain pieces of legislation – there are pros and cons to everything, and I'm sure as we do the consultations, these pros and cons will come to light. We'll deal with them.

I can assure the Members opposite – they say it's a vague resolution. Well, I don't think so because I think it does say a lot. But unless we do something about it, of course, they're right. If we don't act on it, then it's not worth the paper it's written on.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure the Members of this House that this resolution will be acted upon because I'm living it now. I'm living the effects of not having, maybe, the proper protocols in place or whatever, but I feel that the time has come to really sit down with all sides to look at this.

I also thank the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. I thank her for her amendment. I can see the merit of that. I don't see it changing the intent of what I'm trying to do here. I will say – just for the benefit of the Member probably – why I did insert unionized and non-unionized members, because that's what I'm living with today. I'm seeing the unionized on the outside and non-unionized on the inside that have to work; they don't have a choice. It's not the replacement workers I'm talking about; I'm talking about the non-unionized employees. That's why I put it in to make sure that we respect their rights as well, because they do have rights. Everybody has rights in this world. But if

they feel that it's better left out, then certainly as long as all employees are covered, I have no problem with that.

I can be rest assured as well and we can be all rest assured that everything that the Member said will be brought up in these consultations, whether it's the Roil Commission, whether it's the changing of the *Labour Relations Act*, these are all things that will be discussed, I'm sure.

I thank her for that amendment. Protecting the Canadian labour relations values is certainly very, very important for all of us. At this point, she's suggesting that maybe – and she's referring to D-J Composites in particular – there's an unequal playing field there right now. I don't disagree with that. But as I said earlier, we have to make sure that when we address that, we don't swing the pendulum too far the other way. There is a balanced approach that we have to take.

I don't disagree with the Member that there is an unequal playing field here right now because there well may be, but we have to make sure that anything we do, we take into consideration the rights of unions, the rights of companies and that we don't do anything that hinders the climate of development within the province. Because, as I said in my opening remarks, what we do here is very, very important. It has to be in the best interest of everybody because without employers and industry, there will be no employees. So we have to make sure that remains sustainable.

I do take somewhat of an exception to the insinuation that maybe some of us on this side were disingenuous in our remarks. Well, I can assure the hon. Member, I'm not speaking for any other, but I'm didn't hear anything disingenuous. I can speak for myself that what I'm saying today I'm very passionate about. I'm very passionate; I'm very concerned about what's happening in the labour movement, especially in Labrador West right now. I'm very concerned. I see what it's doing to my community and I see what it can do any community that's in the same situation. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands alluded to that.

So what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is certainly not disingenuous because I'm very passionate

about this. I see the need that we need to act on this. I see the need for the sake of the whole community, not only the workers but everybody who lives in that community because everybody is affected by this.

I would urge both the company and the union at this point, because what we do here today is not going to help the situation in Lab West today – hopefully, we can learn from this situation and do something that prevents any future situations of the like. What needs to happen today in Labrador West, in particular, is that both sides get back to the bargaining table and talk and negotiate, because I am convinced that they're not that far apart.

When you talk about what the issues are, yes, a lot of it is principle, and we have to protect our principles. There's no question about that. Whether it's temporary workforce, whether it's replacement workforce, we have to protect our principles. Unions are built on principles.

I lived in the union towns. I worked in that environment. I know what it's like to work in that environment. I worked both sides of it, but I can tell you, if people are prepared to listen to each other and talk to each other, we can work in harmony.

I was a supervisor for many years and I worked with many union members. I tell you, I have a lot of respect for anybody who works in that environment in the mining industry, whether they're unionized or non-unionized, I have a lot of respect for them. I tell you, what I see happening today has some great concern for me.

I am very pleased that all sides of the House are supportive of my PMR. It's something that I felt was necessary to do. I don't have a problem with the amendment that the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi put forward, not at all. I just gave you the reasons why I thought it was important that we respect the rights of all workers, whether unionized or non-unionized. We all have rights. They all have rights, but if it's the wish of the Assembly to support that, I don't have a problem with it.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank everybody for their input. I thank everybody for the debate, I think it's a healthy one. I look forward, in the

days ahead, to taking action on what we've said here today. I want to put action to words because words mean nothing unless they're acted upon.

Once again, I say to my constituents in Labrador West, keep the faith. We will get through this. It's tough going right now but I'm confident that within the next little while we will see a resolution that both sides can live with and we can get back to a thriving region where we've just witnessed two or three years of very hard times in the downturn of the mining industry.

I see light at the end of the tunnel. I want us to get back to what we do best and that's producing a world-class iron ore product that's the envy of the world market.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Passed.

On motion, amendment carried.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Before we adjourn, I just want to remind Members that the House Management Commission is meeting tonight, right after the House has adjourned. I'd probably advise the front row, especially on government side, to clear your tables, your desks.

It being Wednesday, and in accordance with Standing Order 9, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. in the afternoon.