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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Harry Cuff and Rosalind Hayward, who are the subject of a Member's statement today. They are joined by several members of their family, as you can see: Juanita, Brian, Dale and Brittany Cuff, and Gary and Tony Cuff. I have Lori and Dion Upward, Elina Upward and Charlie Hayward.

Welcome to all of you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Joining us in the public gallery today, I would like to recognize Gordon Hawco, who will also be referenced in a Member's statement today. He is join by his wife Donna Hawco, daughter Suzanne Hawco, and grandchildren Prezley Curan and Zachary Hawco-Crowley.

Welcome to all of you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today, we will hear from the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Ferryland, Humber - Bay of Islands, Harbour Main and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker,

I have often said that no community can exist without the helping hand of the committed volunteers. On Saturday night, I had the distinct honour of attending the 40th anniversary celebration of Alton United Church in my home community of Port Blandford.

The vision to construct a new church originated in 1978, when a newly formed Building Committee had a dream. Members of this committee were honoured by the more than 100

residents, including Rev. A. George Demmons, who attended the celebration organized by Yvonne Pardy and the UCW.

The members of that Building Committee executive were: chairman and treasurer, George Efford; past chairman, Laban Davis; secretary, Alonzo Holloway. Other members included: Jesse Stead, James Oldford, Freeman Oldford, Lindberg Greening and the only surviving member, Sidney Matthews.

I have many fond memories in this church. It is where I attended as a child, sang in the youth choir and I volunteered, like my mother and father, on the board of trustees and the official board.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the original members of the Alton United Church Building Committee and the achievement of the church's 40th anniversary milestone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in the hon. House to recognize the Kinsmen Club of Witless Bay on their 13th annual Puffin Festival and the fundraising contributions they make to groups and the organizations in their area.

On July 28 and 29, the Kinsmen Club of Witless Bay held their 13th annual festival. I was certainly pleased to be in attendance on Sunday afternoon to see, again, their extraordinary volunteer efforts.

The members' commitment to this event raises a lot of funds and is the main fundraiser for the year. Funds raised over the years have been donated to our local schools, sports teams, community groups, people in need, organizations as CF, MS and the Autism Society.

Each year, the festival is a great success, and showcases the hard work and dedication of our Kinsmen Club of Witless Bay and the spirit of friendship of the residents of the area to make each year such a great success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in recognizing the Witless Bay Kinsmen Club in the great work they do for the region.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize McAuley Bellows of Summerside.

McAuley is one of the four recipients across Canada for the 4-H Canada Leadership Excellence Awards of Distinction, awarded for the community engagement and communication pillar component. He will receive a \$20,000 scholarship towards four years of post-secondary studies and be matched with a mentor who plays a leadership role in their industry and community.

McAuley has been an active member of the Summerside 4-H Rockets since age five and has taken on various leadership roles with the club over the years. He is an avid volunteer in his community and, while in high school, was an active member of Templeton Academy Cadet Corps, rising through the ranks to Master Corporal.

He is a recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador High School Volunteer Award, a Duke of Edinburgh gold medal. McAuley is also a member of the Premier's Youth Council. He is currently in his first year of business studies at Grenfell College and hopes to pursue a career in law.

I ask all Members to join with me in congratulating McAuley on his achievement and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, volunteers are the heart of our communities. They are the people who make our communities thrive by giving generously.

Gordon Hawco of Harbour Main has been dedicating his time and skill to the people of his community for several decades. Perhaps we need to look at his examples of contribution and what he may receive in return. While not material, the joy and freedom brought to others undoubtedly provides a tremendous sense of satisfaction and pride.

Between 1985 and 1986, Gordon was a member of the Avondale Recreation Committee and, along with other members, created a ball field enjoyed by many – still to this day. In 1986, he joined the Avondale Volunteer Fire Department where he held the position of chief for 23 years until recently stepping down. Gordon remains the president of the CBC Volunteer Fire Department, a position he has held for 23 years.

In 2001, Gordon received a Certificate of Recognition in honour of his activities as a volunteer – International Year of Volunteers. In 2001, Gordon received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal.

From helping his parish with fundraising, repairs and cleaning, to serving as the chairperson of the Parish Finance Committee, Gordon is a true example of an individual willing to lend time and skill in any capacity needed for the enhancement of a community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in recognizing Gordon Hawco of Harbour Main for his outstanding volunteerism and positive leadership within his community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Bonavista.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, heroics in the face of danger are nothing new in our province. That is certainly true for recent cancer survivor Harry Cuff, formerly of Bonavista.

On the morning of January 14, 1958, Gary, Tony and Rosalind Cuff, all five and under, were playing on Bake Pot Pond in Bonavista. While playing, Rosalind fell through some newly formed ice. Gary ran home to get his older brother Harry, while Tony stood by with Rosalind.

Not thinking twice, Harry rushed to the scene in just his boots and underwear as he had been sleeping when the news came. Upon arrival, Rosalind had been submerged for approximately 10 minutes with only a piece of her red jacket showing under the water. This didn't stop 21-year-old Harry, who braved the frigid water, and after two attempts rescued the unresponsive little girl. Having been away to the Mainland and learning CPR, he was successful in the resuscitation, thus saving her life.

Earlier this year, Harry's brother Gary and I nominated him for a NL bravery award. Unfortunately, and understandingly, he was turned down because only acts after 1983 are considered.

However, please join me in recognizing Harry here today in the people's House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: And while we're on our feet, I would like to also advise this House that it's the birthday, today, for the Member for Mount Pearl North.

Happy birthday.

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 in this hon. House to highlight the importance of getting your flu shot.

On Monday past, the regional health authorities started their annual public immunization clinics and they're offering the vaccine for free. Getting a flu shot is a simple action that can save lives by protecting yourself if you're exposed to the virus.

By being vaccinated, you are also helping to protect other vulnerable people, such as young children, seniors over the age of 65 and those with chronic illnesses like lung disease or weakened immune systems.

The vaccine protects against four strains of the influenza virus, including H1N1 and H3N2. Approximately 125,000 people received the flu shot last year through the provincial government's publicly funded vaccination program.

I am pleased to note that to further increase vaccine access, the number of public clinics will be increased again this year.

For more information on scheduled clinic locations, people can visit the website of their regional health authority or call 811. People can also get their flu shot from their family doctor or local pharmacy if offered. Remember to bring your MCP card and wear a short-sleeved shirt.

I encourage all residents, along with my hon. colleagues, to lower the risk of getting sick this year. Protect yourself. Protect your loved ones. Find a clinic near you and get your flu shot.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. For many groups that are particularly vulnerable contracting the flu, like our seniors, obtaining the flu shot is critical for prevention.

This past year, the chief medical officer for health for Newfoundland and Labrador said we have not seen the high rates of influenza cases like this in the last five years. Making the flu shot accessible and making the public aware of the fact is a critical component to preventing sickness and even death in vulnerable groups.

Even if you're a member of a group that is not at high risk, it is still important to get a flu shot. This not only protects your own health but also the health of people who are less protected against influenza, those that cannot get the flu shot and those that feel the effects of influenza more severely.

I encourage those that can get the flu shot to do their part and get vaccinated.

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. Public flu clinics are essential to minimize the effects of the flu on our people, so this is a good move.

I also encourage government to cover the cost of pharmacists providing free vaccines through our universal health care program. This will increase the number of people getting the flu shot, both in urban and rural communities by making it more accessible. Pharmacists are part of a universal program in eight out of 10 provinces and it should happen here too.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in St. John's yesterday I had the pleasure of participating in the third Minister's Roundtable on Immigration; an initiative of *The Way Forward*.

It has been almost two years since we launched the Immigration Action Plan, a collaborative, partnership-driven plan to increase the number of newcomers to our province to 1,700 annually by 2022.

Throughout the province, we are already seeing the positive results from that plan. Since January of this year, the provincial government has received 25 per cent more immigration applications compared to the same time period in 2017. In 2017, 547 newcomers were nominated under the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Nominee Program and an additional 285 newcomers under the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, for a total of 832 individuals.

Yesterday's round table brought together representatives of the business community, labour, K-12 education system, post-secondary institutions, municipalities, community organizations and service providers. Together, we discussed potential new initiatives for year three of the Immigration Action Plan as part of our ongoing efforts to increase newcomer attraction and retention. The input that we received will inform our planning as we identify priority actions to help retain newcomers, strengthen our communities and grow the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in commending the members of the Minister's Roundtable on Immigration for their dedication to the province's prosperity and to our future growth.

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.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We commend the members of the

Roundtable on Immigration and every concerned citizen for stepping up to help come up with solutions that will help this province turn the corner from decline to growth. The issue impacts all of us, and generations to come.

Business, labour, students and educators, municipalities, community organizations, service providers – all of them and all of us have an interest and a stake in making our province more welcoming to immigrants. And it's not just welcoming people, it's also retaining the people who come here and who already live here.

Our province's population has been declining desperately and needs to grow. Our most profound challenges come from shrinking, thinning population because the loss of people is raising the per-capita costs of serving our people and reducing the transfers that help pay for those services. Canada is growing while this province spirals downwards.

It's time for the government to really listen to what people are saying about the challenges they face here, the challenges that are driving them away. Issues like high taxes that drive up the cost of living and leave employers with less money to hire and create jobs for people in order to stay here. None of that will change until we get a government that really listens to the people.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm pleased to join with him in congratulating round-table members on their work to date. It's good to see an increase in the numbers of people coming to the province, but the minister knows, more important than the number of newcomers, is the retention rate. A recent report pegged our five-year immigration retention rate at 56 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister have information on any improvements in that number?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister for Fisheries and Land Resources.

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

I would like to report to the House some information about the incredibly positive transformation that is underway, a transformation in our province's agricultural industry.

Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, from 2011 to 2015 one in five farms in Newfoundland and Labrador shut their gates permanently. This is no longer acceptable and is not acceptable from our government; that's why we're acting. No long is this very viable industry going to left fallow. We are working with new entrants, Mr. Speaker, supporting farmers who, by their very nature, are innovative and entrepreneurial to take the agricultural industry to the next level in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the culture of the agriculture industry is strong and it is transforming to improve. Our government recognized that if the industry is to remain competitive, it must become a more professionalized, competitive and sustainable sector that, in turn, attracts the brightest and the best, and that is exactly what is happening now today.

I have seen what new entrants are bringing to this field. They are bursting with innovative ideas. They see efficiencies; they embrace technology. We are fostering that.

Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership between the federal and provincial governments, our government is supporting 23 new entrants into the farming industry, with a total committed funding of \$1.3 million, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: And under the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program, 33 new entrants have received a commitment of just over \$500,000.

And we, Mr. Speaker, are just getting started.

These new entrants are developing land for agriculture, installing innovative equipment, working smarter and more efficiently.

Our farmers and producers told us point blank, Mr. Speaker, what the agriculture industry needs, and we are listening. We listened and we are getting the job done. We are delivering on our Way Forward commitments and we are transforming the agricultural sector in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for the better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his partial statement.

I would like to commend the government for the recognition of the need to expand our agriculture industry and the, I guess, committed support. And while his statement was very poetic and complimentary – and by the way, I thank you for that as a farmer – the rollout of this funding has been very much a disappointment.

In this past spring session, I highlighted that it was an unprecedented delay of getting these applications into the farmers' hands and it was going to cost hardship down the road, and that's what we're seeing right now. Normally, it's in the hands by the 1st of April. This year, it's the end of summer.

Producers are now pressed to complete the projects before this fiscal year end. If this administration is serious about reversing this declining number of farmer trend, they're going to have to put a lot more effort and attention and focus on it.

I would like to remind the minister and the administration that photo opportunities and political announcements do not feed people – farmers do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

And I, too, thank the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

I'm pleased to hear all this good news about the important agricultural industry, but what I didn't hear from the minister is information about what we need to significantly improve our province's food security. We have the lowest number of farms in Canada. When cut off from Canada by weather, we have a mere three days supply of produce. We import 71 per cent of all of our food.

I ask the minister: How many more acres of land are needed under cultivation? Give us the key statistic to reaching food security.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. the Premier or the Minister of Natural Resources, as the case may be.

After weeks of public discussion regarding fiscal and legal troubles being endured by Astaldi, Nalcor issued a stop-work order to them on Thursday, October 18. Today is payday for these employees and Astaldi has failed to pay them. Employees are now concerned about how they will pay their bills.

I ask the minister, or the Premier: How long will employees have to wait for paycheques, and who will be making the payments?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, some of the ongoing issues that all of us have had to deal with, with the Muskrat Falls Project, and today is certainly something that we're very disappointed to see, that those hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – some 500 people have been working, doing the job that they have asked to do by a company that was put in place by the former administration. I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition is very much aware of that.

Mr. Speaker, right now, I've already met with the executive director, Trades NL, Darin King. I've had a couple of conversations with him, as well as the CEO, Stan Marshall of Nalcor. These wages will be paid.

It's important that workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, when they go to work, they would get the paycheque that they so rightfully deserve. Right now, Nalcor is working at the ways that logistically this could happen, but those workers will get paid.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that it was Nalcor that hired Astaldi.

I ask the Premier: Will the health and pension and other benefit plans be paid at the same time?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, as you know, there are ongoing problems with this project of which right now there are performance bonds, there are sureties in place. There are about \$400 million in bonds that are in place to take care of the deficiencies that people are experiencing now with Astaldi.

So, Mr. Speaker, right now, CEO Stan Marshall with Nalcor is working with those bonding companies. As the Leader of the Opposition would be very much aware, this is an issue right now between Nalcor and those companies, and they are telling me and confirming with me that under the bonding process, mechanics' lien and so on, logistically there is obviously some work that would have to be done with performance bonds and sureties in place up to some \$400 million, to make sure, number one, this project can get finished, people could get paid and that we can mitigate any further damage that has been caused by (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: What I draw from what the Premier just told us, Mr. Speaker, is that there will be some delay before these things are sorted out; the health and benefit and pension issues.

Can the Premier assure these hard-working individuals that there will be no long-term damage to their interests?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, as I just said, I've been working closely with the CEO of Nalcor who put in preventative measure to make sure that those people that deserve to be paid, will be paid.

This is a long list of the issues that we've had to deal with as this administration that we inherited; the mess that was put in place by the administration that you lead.

We will take every effort to make sure that those hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians get paid, and people that have put and made their own investments in time and so on in this project, they get what they rightfully deserve.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the former administration, the administration that the Leader of the Opposition now leads, has left this on the backs of taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are working hard. I would like to know, do you consider this project a mistake?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier knows, this is not a new issue; and, in fact, it developed three years into his watch.

The media has been reporting that Astaldi has been experiencing financial trouble for weeks.

So I ask the Premier: Are you disappointed in Nalcor's lack of planning? Why wasn't there a preventative plan in place to get workers home, ensure they were paid and protect their benefits?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, as the Member to the right there looks at his leader and says, good job – well, what is not a good job was the highlight of what the Leader of the Opposition just said. He said: Am I disappointed with the preplanning by Astaldi? I'm extremely disappointed by the planning by Astaldi; extremely disappointed with Nalcor.

In the beginning of this, when this very administration that he leads said that Nalcor and their government had done the preplanning that was required, that this project would be on budget, maybe even below budget and on

schedule and it would not double the rates of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, how does he feel? How does he feel about the preplanning that was done by the administration that he now leads?

Will the Leader of the Opposition please stand in his place, let people in this province know, was this project a big mistake?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind all –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind all Members, it's been a challenging three days; even though it's a short week. I want to keep the temperature down. I am not going to tolerate heckling, chirping, whatever you want to call it. I want to hear only from the person being addressed.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The last time I looked, I wasn't the head of an administration. I'm more interested in what's happening now.

Nalcor's CEO indicated that Nalcor would assist workers in returning home.

Premier, has Nalcor provided an update to you? Have all workers returned home safely?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And you had mentioned already, this has been a challenging three days, and it has been. It has been, Mr. Speaker. But I will say this, when it comes to Muskrat Falls it's been a challenging three years, Mr. Speaker, and the challenges still exist. Because even though he likes to distance himself from the people that are sitting with him right now, he says I was not part of that administration but you had sat with this

administration. You asked to be there. You asked to be there right now.

I can see some of your Members are getting upset because they know – they know. They don't know where you stand, Mr. Speaker, so I would like to know so we can have a good debate. Answer the questions that need to be answered. Are you now defending the project with the colleagues that you currently sit with? Leader of the Opposition, was it a mistake, yes or no?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I must be misinformed, but I thought that Question Period was for the Opposition to ask questions –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: – and not the other way around.

Nalcor will now need to find a new company to complete the remaining Astaldi work. Those who are now being laid off by Astaldi are starting to look for jobs elsewhere.

Will the Premier ensure that the workers who are negatively impacted this last week, including Indigenous persons, will receive hiring priority?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I would understand why the Leader of the Opposition would not want to answer that question and why he would prefer that we answer the questions that he is asking us in this House of Assembly. I get that. He is obviously very disappointed with the administration that he now leads, very disappointed – or should be, I would say should be very disappointed with the decisions that they make.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking every measure we can to make sure that people in this province find gainful employment. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance gave us a full list of the hours of employment and people, person-years

of work that we were able to put in place under this challenging environment that we've inherited.

We were dealing with all the issues that we've inherited with the Muskrat Falls Project, and I can guarantee the people of this province their electricity rates will not double, and ratepayers will not have to pay (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, with the date set for the general election in current legislation, I don't think I'll be the leader of an administration until next year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: When will Nalcor hire a new company to complete this work? How will Nalcor ensure that these issues don't cause more schedule delays or cost overruns?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, that all started with some decisions that we had made by putting a new CEO in place, as the Leader of the Opposition would very well know. Mr. Speaker, they made a commitment then to get this project finished on a new schedule with the budget that was in place, a more appropriate budget.

I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition, all you need to do is just tune in to the inquiry and you would get a better understanding of the challenges that we've inherited: the poor planning that was done in the beginning; the double of electricity rates. We are dealing with all those issues. Taking the PUB out of the decision by the group that you lead, I know I would not want to call them an administration either – and yes, I would be ashamed of the decisions that they made.

Mr. Speaker, once and for all, we are dealing with those challenging issues. But, answer the question: Was it a mistake or not?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Again, I'm more interested in today than in yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

Nalcor's CEO says that this stop-work order will not cause more cost overrun or schedule delay. I ask the Premier: Will he direct Nalcor to release publicly documentation that supports these conclusions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Nalcor now, Stan Marshall, has made some public comments that the current disruption by Astaldi would not lead to a change in schedule and the budget would be intact.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with those challenges. CEO Marshall at Nalcor is working with the challenges that we have faced. I've heard the Leader of the Opposition, and I think that this is the appropriate forum, as he talked about honesty in politics – he talked about honesty in politics. So don't continue waffling. Answer the question: Was it a mistake or not?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: On the subject of honesty in politics, Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us if he has met with the CEO of Nalcor specifically on the issue of the possibility of cost overruns caused by the present events and schedule delay, and when was that?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, last night I talked to the CEO of Nalcor on the issue around wages. I talked to them again this morning, along with the Minister of Natural Resources.

We've met with the executive director of Trades NL to deal with this issue about wages. That's a priority for us today: getting people paid.

If there's anyone that understands loss of schedule and the doubling of the budget, doubling of electricity rates, you don't need only to ask me, ask the people that you're sitting with. And please let them know: Do you feel that it was a mistake or not? Be honest with the people in this province. You are now Leader of the Opposition; people deserve to know where you stand. Was it a mistake or not?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Perhaps it's in order to take a breather from the level of rhetoric that has been attained.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: And I'd, therefore, like to ask the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL: Approximately 85 former Marystown Shipyard workers represented by the Marystown Shipyard Families Alliance committee are requesting the establishment of an intake clinic to collect their medical history and history of workplace toxic exposures.

As we draw closer to the announcement of the purchase and leasing of the former shipyard and the disposition of its environmental liabilities, would the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL commit to addressing the environmental impact on human health by establishing an intake clinic to assist in resolving these claims?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, to date, we have reviewed 99 claims with the Marystown Shipyard, and I am actually in discussion right now with my staff regarding these files and plan on meeting with the alliance in the near future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Can you give the public some indication of when the intake clinics might be set up?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite brings forth a very important topic for the individuals around Marystown but I really cannot give an exact date right now; however, I can certainly follow up and when we get more information on how we're going to move forward on this particular situation I can inform the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister.

Again, depending on who has the cooler head, I leave it to the Premier or the Minister of Natural Resources to decide. Bill C-69 is currently working its way through the federal Senate. This bill has the potential to diminish the jurisdiction of the C-NLOPB and the principle of joint management.

I ask: What, if any, representation have you made to your federal colleagues to protect our industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Welcome to the information and work that we've been doing for the last two years. I'm glad they finally woke to Bill C-69, Mr. Speaker. We've been dealing with this very important issue for the last two years. We've had multiple meetings and roundtables with industry on this very important issue.

Allow me to inform the Member opposite, who probably is not aware, that in 2012, actually, the role of C-NLOPB was diminished it wasn't

under this legislation. However, I will say this, Mr. Speaker, we have been working with our federal colleagues to ensure that an office of CEAA is here in St. John's. The first time ever the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has an office here, and the industry applauds that.

Mr. Speaker, I've been working to have exploration on the project list. We've been working to ensure a role of C-NLOPB. I'm glad he's finally woken up to this very important issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, given that many people in the industry, and beyond the industry, are very concerned that jurisdiction will be taken away from C-NLOPB where we have joint management, and given to the Canadian Environmental protection agency, how is it that the minister is able to offer the establishment of an office by that group in St. John's as progress?

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

MS. COADY: Allow me to inform the Member opposite – I realize he's new to the House, Mr. Speaker, but he's certainly not new to industry here in the province. Allow me to inform him that back in 2012 the former Conservative administration, under the former Progressive Conservative administration here in Newfoundland and Labrador, the role of C-NLOPB was diminished.

While we're working on them, I'll advise him what industry is really concerned about – again, things that happened in 2012 – the timing of the environmental assessments. They're worried about a project list, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that exploration is on the project list so you'd have these regional environmental assessments. We're working very closely with industry on developing the regional environmental assessments. There is a role for C-NLOPB; they're very active on this file.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I perhaps should go back to the Premier in order to get a fresh and less rhetorical set of answers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. CROSBIE: Minister – or my question is for the minister.

Local industry has spoken out against the initiatives contained in C-69, as she acknowledges.

Does this minister believe the bill could negatively impact the goal of the government's oil and gas plan, Advance 2030, to double oil production by 2030, and what measures does this government intend to take in the future to ensure that that plan is not undermined?

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

MS. COADY: I thought I heard there an endorsement of our plan, and I'm glad to hear that. I'm very glad to hear that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: (Inaudible) 150 stakeholders to develop that plan.

Allow me to advise the Member opposite, that we have been back and forth with Ottawa. We've been working with industry on Bill C-69; very concerned about it, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, we're working on ensuring the tightest time frame possible for environmental assessment. We're working on having a regional environmental assessment. We've been on that day in, day out for the last number of years.

We've been waiting to see the regulations around Bill C-69, Mr. Speaker. That's going to be very, very important to this province. We're working to see those regulations, and making sure that what is contained therein is reflective of the commitments that we have from Ottawa to remain (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Could I ask the minister if her government is working with Newfoundland and, indeed, other senators who are critical of Bill C-69?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, as I've said repeatedly now, I've been working very diligently on this file for at least a couple of years. I can tell him exactly the day. I think it was in 2016 when I wrote a letter to Ottawa saying my concerns early, early on in this process.

So I have worked with my colleagues across the country. I've raised it at federal, provincial and territorial meetings, I've raised it in various forums. I've spoken to senators. I've spoken to industry. I've spoken to supply and service industry, at Noia and CAPP. I've worked with everyone to get the best results for this province.

We are committed to Advance 2030 to ensuring that we could have a hundred new exploration wells in the next 12 years, Mr. Speaker. And to ensuring that by 2030 we're pumping 650,000 barrels a day in this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On September 24, your government announced that it would pay \$1 million to McKinsey & Company to help develop an economic development plan for this province.

I ask the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation: By bringing in the consultant company, are you acknowledging that your way forward is, indeed, backwards?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I answered this question yesterday, but in case the Member didn't hear it. In the last three years, Mr. Speaker, we've had our infrastructure plan, which is responsible for 53 person-hours of employment; our health care infrastructure plan, 4,600 person-hours of employment; Husky Energy, 5,000 person-hours of employment; Equinor, 11,000 person-hours of employment; Vale underground, 2,135 person-hours of employment; PAL Aerospace, 150 jobs; Canada Fluorspar, 525 spin-off jobs, in addition to 3,000 person-years of employment; S&P Data, 500 jobs; Quorum, 24 jobs; Grieg aquaculture, 800 new jobs.

I understand my time is up. There are many more, I can keep going.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I thank the minister for highlighting a lot of initiatives that we started under our administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Party with a vision over here, Mr. Speaker.

After being in office for three years, this government still hasn't demonstrated economic growth in action. There has been the 2015 Red Book, *The Way Forward*, the LEAP: Liberal Economic Action Plan, and the Cabinet Committee on Jobs; yet, this government still needs to pay over \$1 million to an outside firm from New York.

I ask the Premier: Will you admit that after three years your government is out of ideas?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: No, Mr. Speaker, we are not out of ideas, and the Minister of Finance just gave a full list of the work that's being created.

But I will tell you, the administration that she is talking about, we were expecting the *New Energy* just a few years ago. The *New Energy* turned out to be a flop and electricity rates, as a result of the administration that you are a part of, would double electricity in our province. Is that the legacy you really want to talk about, I say, Mr. Speaker?

We are very proud of *The Way Forward*. We're very proud of the work that we've been doing throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, in rural communities, right here in the Northeast Avalon, Mr. Speaker. In Labrador as well, mining, the fishery, agriculture, aquaculture, offshore oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, the text sector and much more to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are looking for vision, not rhetoric.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Despite continually announcing plans to make plans, employment has dropped in this province by 5,700 jobs since the Liberals have taken office.

I ask the Premier: How can you say that your plans are working if Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can't find jobs and are leaving the province in record numbers?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, let me clear up the record for a second, but before I do let me

say this, we've created a great number of jobs in this province based on the ideas we've put forward. And the \$1 million to try to diversify and continue to grow those jobs pales in comparison to the millions and millions, in fact, billions of dollars that they invested into Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, because that doesn't pay back nearly as much, I anticipate, as this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Now, Mr. Speaker, last month, September this year over September last year there were 6,600 more jobs in this province. Mr. Speaker, in August of this year over last year there was an increase in jobs. In July of this year over last year there was an increase in jobs. I think our plan is working.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for a final question.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I repeat, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want to see vision and action, not rhetoric and deflection.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Minister, did you or your officials have any conversations with McKinsey & Company or any of its representatives before the RFP was released in July?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe officials in the department reached out to a number of the companies to inform them that this RFP was going to be going out, Mr. Speaker. I understand that we wanted as many people to bid on this RFP as possible, and I understand that a number of them were reached.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday, government announced their Made in Newfoundland and Labrador Carbon Tax in compliance with the federal government.

I ask the Premier: What is his projected revenue from his carbon tax plan, and what is his government planning to do with this revenue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

MR. A. PARSONS: That's one of my titles, yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This week we were very happy to announce that the federal government has endorsed our plan for climate change and for carbon pricing in this province. And I'm glad to see at least the Members of the NDP agree that climate change is real, unlike some of the Members on the other side.

The fact is that this is not about generating revenue for the Treasury, this is about reducing emissions. And I'm happy to see that unlike other provinces where people will be paying more for home heating fuels, more at the pumps, here, people are going to keep their money in the province.

But what I can say is that we will be working with the federal government. In fact, we have one from the climate change action fund where there's going to be \$300 million over 10 years invested in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, we're still a little bit vague on details, so I'll ask the Premier: Government says they will participate in federal green programs with matching funds for various projects. That's not the same as putting our

carbon tax money into a permanent provincial green fund.

So I ask the Premier: How much carbon tax revenue will he commit to green programs, and how much will be going into general revenue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, and hopefully I'll be a little more clear to the Member and she will understand the good work that this government has done in not only achieving a carbon pricing scheme that fits into the federal plan, but we're also going to see money staying in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

One of the things that we're very proud of is our Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. Well, we will be investing \$44.7 million that will be going into efficiency projects and green infrastructure in this province. And that will be matched by the federal government. But that's not the same, actually, as the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which I just mentioned, which will see \$300 million invested in this province over the next 10 years.

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.

One way that jurisdictions use carbon tax revenues is by creating a fund to help local residents, businesses and non-profit organizations retrofit homes and provinces. But programs in this province are only available to a fraction of those who need them.

I ask the Premier: Will his government commit to creating a dedicated carbon tax retrofit fund to help more people prepare for the onslaught of Muskrat Falls?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people that benefit from a carbon pricing scheme, and we all know that – I know there are people out there that deny it. I mean, the fact is even the latest Nobel Prize winner acknowledged that we need carbon pricing imposed on all provinces and it should be universal.

The people that really benefit from this and from our plan is every man, woman and child in this province who will be keeping money in their pockets, instead of paying it out – everybody in this province is going to benefit from the scheme that we've had endorsed by the federal government. We're going to see money staying in their pockets, and at the same time we will be reducing emissions in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Transportation is a large greenhouse gas emitter in our province at 34 per cent, but the new carbon tax only replaces the existing gas tax. It won't be a further incentive to reduce emissions which is the purpose for costing carbon.

I ask the Premier. What is his government's incentives to improve public transportation which would cut emissions and stimulate the economy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

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

I think what I took from that question is that the NDP would like to raise taxes on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's what I took from the question that she asked.

We, however, would prefer a scheme and a plan that's been endorsed by the federal government that will see emissions being reduced, but at the same time we have had exemptions approved

that will allow for home heating fuel, allow for aviation, allow for transportation. Because I can guarantee you, there are a number of people in this province that rely on transportation to get to major centres to have health care and education. We want to make sure they're able to do that and at the same time are not hard hit by a tax like the Members opposite would like to see.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for a very quick question, please

MS. MICHAEL: Well, I ask the minister, Mr. Speaker, we know people want to get to places and we know that he wants money in their pocket to get there, but if there's no transportation system across the province, how are they going to do it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change.

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

There actually is a transportation system across this province. A number of my constituents are forced to take aircraft to get from one side to the other. We got an exemption for that.

A number of people are forced to take their own cars, they're actually not going to see a significant increase at all. Actually, a 60 litre fill up will see an increase of about 25 cents. And we have other exemptions across the board that will do two things: it's going to keep money in people's pockets, unlike what the Members want, but we're also going to reduce emissions in this province. We need to do something better for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Sanding and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act, which will be titled Bill 29. It will be a different bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, Bill 32.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Private Investigation And Security Services Act, Bill 30.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, Bill 31.

And, Mr. Speaker, I further give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Arts Council Act, Bill 28.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions

Petitions

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, on this momentous day, being the first day following the approval of the EU single plastics ban, I present the following:

We, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reduce litter and plastic pollution, and reduce the impact on wildlife by introducing a ban on the supply of lightweight, single-use, supermarket-style plastic shopping bags. We also call on the government to urge consumers to take reusable bags when shopping, instead of using single-use plastic bags, and to keep a reusable bag with them so that they are always prepared.

Single-use plastic bags are polluting our natural environment. While so much focus has been given to carbon reduction, very little has been given to physical pollution, such as that that the plastic bags contribute to. Right now, it is speculated there is actually more plastic in our oceans worldwide than there is fish. And as of last week, it has been documented for the very first time that micro-plastics are just about through all of our digestive systems. That means it's in the food we eat.

The health concerns with this is not documented, but a foreign object such as plastic in your system is not a good thing by any means. Our environment is being contaminated, wildlife are being physically hampered by it, and we'll see these damages years down the road as well. We have to stop that now.

I challenge anybody who does not support the ban to go to the city dump, down at dump site A on a windy day, and while they may only be less than 1 per cent of the garbage we produce, it is

one of the most mobile forms of waste, and it does get in our ocean in a very short time frame.

So, as I said, we urge the government to implement this ban. Why do we have to be the one wagging the tail? Why do we have to be on the hind quarter? Australia has done it, other places throughout Canada has done it, and now the EU has also done it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

I rise again today on another petition that I presented the other day, and I'm going to present it again today.

The current 1.6 kilometre busing policy results in children walking to school with no sidewalks or traffic lights or through areas without crosswalks. It puts the safety of these children at risk.

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

I brought this up the other day and I had a response from the minister. I was very pleased with the response that I did have from the minister and we spoke about it afterwards.

I understand the courtesy busing rule that's in place but it limits the number of seats that are on that bus. I went back to the school and checked and in the area which I was talking about the other day, was an area in Torbay where the sides of the road are in hard shape and it's very difficult for children to walk along the side of the road there. Those buses going past that have 63 children on them and that apparently is the full that they can have before any courtesy busing.

Areas that I'm talking about are places where safety is a concern. On a normal day in the Town of Torbay 17,000 cars a day travel along that road, when there's a very small shoulder on the road. You're talking about children that have to go on the road that are anywhere from five or six years old to 17 or 18 years old. So we're talking young children on the side of a road that has 17,000 cars a day, where the side of the road is washed out. They have to go up on the road.

Parents have contacted me. They're very, very concerned, and I'm concerned and I'm sure everyone in this House is concerned. We're all concerned about the safety of children. We're concerned about the safety of anyone.

The 1.6 kilometre busing policy has to be reduced, has to be eliminated when safety is a concern. It's about our children and it's about safety when our children leave to go to school.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I had a response, if I may.

There's a response from the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills, probably representing the Department of Education, I would suggest.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly appreciate the petitions that the Members opposite have put forward in this House. Mr. Speaker, I think a lot of – we talk about safety and I just hope that the Members opposite are not inferring that safety is not important to this side of the House, because it is. We understand there are some challenges out there throughout our province and the conditions that we have now just really didn't happen overnight. I mean these conditions have been there for quite some time.

Mr. Speaker, it concerns me as well as minister, and I've had a number of discussions with the school board. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, during the summer and getting ready for September, I really put it on the top of the list because we've all heard of stories of buses that are passing students and there are empty seats on those buses.

So I've asked the school board that we would put not only courtesy seating in place, but we've also put in a courtesy stop, which is a little different than just courtesy seating. The courtesy stop, we've tried to look at a range of somewhere around 0.8 kilometres, which of course right now puts us better than any other province in Canada at 0.8.

So we're continuing to work with that, Mr. Speaker, and it's a concern that I do have, and I've asked my staff as well to look at, and continue to look at, the 1.6 kilometres.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At a time when the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are dealing with high levels of taxation, increased unemployment rates, increased food bank usage, increased bankruptcies and many are being forced to choose between food, heat and medications, Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro are continuing to seek numerous power rate increases through the Public Utilities Board. Once the Muskrat Falls Project comes online, these rates are predicted to further increase significantly to unmanageable levels for the average citizen of our province.

While government has indicated they are working with Nalcor to mitigate rates, they have provided no detailed plan as to how they intend to do so. Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows:

To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to publicly provide all of the potential

options for rate mitigation and develop a comprehensive detailed plan to deal with current and impending power rate increases. This plan is to be provided to the public as soon as possible to allow for scrutiny, feedback and potential suggestions for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, the petition I have here today, mainly from the CBS area, but I know there are others that are coming in.

Mr. Speaker, I will say right from the get-go, as I've said in this House numerous times, I've acknowledged, I voted for Muskrat Falls at the time. I don't mind saying it. There are times now as I look back, as I've seen how things have turned out, I wish I didn't; however, at the time I went on the best information that was provided to me by who I felt had the appropriate information, the officials from Nalcor, Department of Natural Resources and so on.

I voted for it in good faith. I believe that my colleagues at the time also voted for it in good faith. I can't say that there was nobody who may have been in Cabinet at the time in positions of power who may have known more than I know, I don't know. Hopefully the inquiry will flush all that out as to who knew what.

We are certainly hearing some disturbing things already coming from the inquiry, but this is not about Muskrat Falls. Well, it is about Muskrat Falls in terms of this is what's going to be driving cost but the question is, where from here? We could all talk about blame and how we got to this point, but we're at this point now.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has indicated he has a plan and government has a plan that will result in nobody's electricity rates going up and taxpayers are not going to be on the hook either. So neither ratepayers nor taxpayers will be on the hook. That sounds wonderful, and if he has a magic wand or a money tree that can make that happen, I would ask for him to present that money tree to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we will gladly accept that gift but it's very difficult to believe that that's the case and I'm asking for a plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member will remember that when he sanctioned Muskrat Falls, indications were that at the time, and at the time that the former administration sanctioned the project, electricity rates were going to be up over 16 cents a kilowatt hour, Mr. Speaker.

What the Premier has said, and I'll repeat it here, he said that the full burden of Muskrat Falls, which is what the former – the Member opposite had sanctioned – the full burden of Muskrat Falls will fall upon the ratepayers of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, even though it was a project where only 40 per cent of the electricity was going to go to the ratepayers. So when in the due diligence that the Member opposite talked about, it was important to note that the rates were going to increase to about 16-plus cents, Mr. Speaker, and that the full burden was going to fall on the ratepayers.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are working on a plan. The Premier has been very clear, it's not going to – the full burden will not fall on the ratepayers of this province, Mr. Speaker, that's not fair. We cannot have rates going up the way that they would go up because of the cost of Muskrat Falls.

We are working on a plan to bridge the gap, to bridge the cost that it is going to cost the taxpayers and the ratepayers if we were to use the former administration's plan. We're bridging that gap between what the available revenue is. We're working on revenue plans, we're working on expense plans, we're working on a number of plans to bring down that burden, Mr. Speaker, and that's how we're going to move forward.

Thank you for the opportunity, and we'll certainly have plans going forward to ensure that we do the best with Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I present the following petition:

The 15 per cent retail sales tax on insurance premiums that the provincial government imposed in 2016 has significantly increased the cost of insurance.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to eliminate the 15 per cent retail sales tax on insurance premiums.

This goes back, Mr. Speaker, to the 2016 budget, and we've talked for a long – we've debated this issue and we continue to talk about it.

To put it in perspective, that tax actually costs the average household \$500 to \$1,000 per family, if you're dealing with the average family of four, or with children getting their licence driving, which is higher premiums. That's not the insurance, that's the tax. That's the tax on the actual insurance. You got to put it into account how much that actual insurance is to a family. Then you're adding on 15 per cent. That was not there for a long time under the previous administration. This was a revenue generating exercise in 2016. We argued against it then and we continue to argue against it.

As recently as the most recent by-election in Windsor Lake, me and my colleagues, and our leader, we knocked a lot of doors. That was an issue that came up at a lot of people's houses. Taxation was always an issue. They identified – it's an insurance tax.

So we're not in here – like, this is not created out of thin air just to have something to petition. This is an actual real issue. It's an issue in my district. It's an issue, I think, in all our districts right across, both sides of this House, all sides. It's 15 per cent, and to reduce it by 1 per cent or 2 per cent is insulting, Mr. Speaker.

We got an economy, we got a population that are taxed too heavily. The economy is crumbling. Even though you might want to say – and the blame goes around in this House and

everywhere. I mean people are tired of hearing the blame game. The problem is you got an economy that's struggling, you got a 15 per cent insurance tax. We've been listening to it for years, whether it's the captains of industry, it's a way forward, it's a way backward, there's a brighter tomorrow, we're looking for a solution, Mr. Speaker. Drop the tax, among other things.

I'm petitioning on the tax. There are a lot of things in that 300 new taxes and fees that we're living with since 2016 we can all argue against, but right now, today, I'm going to concentrate on the 15 per cent. But give us some answers, give us some details. The rhetoric, the blame game is growing tired with everybody.

All you got to do in Question Period is pick up your phone and the messages from people watching on television, they're laughing. They're not laughing in a good way, though, Mr. Speaker. They're laughing out of frustration.

It's time for this government to take some action and do what's right for the people. Get rid of this tax and maybe look at the other 300 taxes and fees before people can really seriously look at them again.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on a point of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of privilege.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, O'Brien and Bosc, in the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, state: A Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as possible after becoming aware of the situation.

As you indicated yesterday, Mr. Speaker, before entering a question of privilege in this hon. House, and I quote you: "Before rising to speak in the House, the Member must first give the

Speaker written notice of the matter; oral notice may also be given privately to the Speaker.”

And this is why I’m raising this point now, since it was yesterday that the House indicated a concern with the public release of the reports written by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. Until that time, I was not aware of this issue since the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, by his own admission yesterday, has no statutory authority to direct Members to keep reports secret, nor did he make a request for confidentiality regarding these reports, either to the complainants or to the accused.

Following the adoption of the Opposition motion yesterday, I notified the Speaker of my intention to make this statement and transmitted the required information prior to the afternoon sitting of the House, and at 6:03 p.m. yesterday the Speaker advised me of receipt of this text. I refer to O’Brien and Bosc, page 141, where matters involving privilege before the House are treated with the utmost seriousness.

As you outlined yesterday, there is a formal process to be followed. I have followed the process and notified the Speaker of my intention to raise this issue of privilege, and this is the earliest possible opportunity for me to raise my issue.

O’Brien and Bosc state: “It is impossible to codify all incidents” that “might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and as such constitute prima facie cases of privilege. However, some matters found to be prima facie” case “include ... damaging” the “Member’s reputation, the usurpation of the title of Member of Parliament, the intimidation of Members and their staff and of witnesses before committees, and the provision of misleading information.”

O’Brien and Bosc quote Maingot as stating: “The purpose of raising matters of ‘privilege’ in either House of Parliament is to maintain the respect and credibility due to and required of each House in respect of these privileges, to uphold its powers, and to enforce the enjoyment of the privileges of its Members. A genuine question of privilege is therefore a serious matter not to be reckoned with lightly and accordingly

ought to be rare, and thus rarely raised in the House of Commons.”

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you ruled on a motion from the Official Opposition and found there to be a prima facie case of privilege regarding my release of two reports I received from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. I received one of these reports on August 24 and I received the other on October 3.

A finding of contempt falls under the umbrella of privilege and the House has a right to punish, as a contempt, any action which may not be a specific breach but tends to obstruct or impede Members of the House in discharging their duties or as an offence to the dignity of the House including disobedience of legitimate commands.

As I noted yesterday, an August 28 report from CBC News, which is available online, states the following regarding two reports from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards that were issued on August 24. I quote: “CBC News obtained copies of the report, handed over by Holloway himself, that show he believed the two cabinet ministers bullied, harassed and isolated him.”

In the interest of consistency and fairness and equal treatment, I ask that as per your ruling yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you find that this action by the Member for Terra Nova constituted a prima facie case of privilege. I further ask you to direct the House to proceed to debate the following motion:

WHEREAS the Speaker has ruled that the release of reports produced recently by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards constitute a prima facie case of privilege; and

WHEREAS the Member for Terra Nova released two of the reports produced by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to the CBC in August prior to those being tabled in the House.

BE IT RESOLVED this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for an appropriate action as per the motion adopted by the House on October 24.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. KIRBY: This motion is seconded by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Do I have further speakers to this point of privilege before I render my decision?

Seeing none, I will – I'm sorry, the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker, you'll have to direct me if I'm out of line, I guess.

In response to this, I'd like to offer this to the House. It's dated Friday, August 24, 4:38 p.m.

Hello, Mr. Holloway – the email is from Ariana Kelland, she's a reporter with the CBC – I am a reporter with CBC in St. John's. I'm reaching out to you to see if you have confirmation that Eddie Joyce and Dale Kirby have been cleared of wrongdoing in relation to your complaint and if there is anything further you can add.

Her email continues: it sources, breaking – sources tell me province's Commissioner for Legislative Standards has cleared MHAs Eddie Joyce and Dale Kirby of any wrongdoing regarding harassment complaints filed by fellow MHA Colin Holloway. Watch NTV News tonight at 6 p.m. for details. Thanks, Ariana.

Mr. Speaker, that is evidence I'm prepared to table in this House that the reports were already out there on the 24th of August as of this email at 4:38 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Any further speakers to this at this time before I will recess to make my decision and report back to this House?

Seeing no further speakers, we will be in recess and I will come back shortly.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Regarding the motion on the point of privilege by the Member for Mount Scio, I find that there is a prima facie breach of privilege by way of contempt.

I would now ask the Member for Mount Scio to move his motion.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to – oh, restate the motion?

MR. SPEAKER: Please.

MR. KIRBY: WHEREAS the Speaker has ruled that the release of reports produced recently by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards constitute a prima facie beach of privilege; and

WHEREAS the Member for Terra Nova released two of the reports produced by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to CBC in August prior to those being tabled in the House.

BE IT RESOLVED that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for an appropriate action as per the motion adopted by the House on October 24.

Moved by me, and seconded by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

As in previous in the week, I'd like to instruct the House as to how we will proceed. We'll be following regular rules of debate. We'll now commence on the debate before – I'd like to indicate that all Members who wish to speak to the vote, I need you to be relevant.

The question before us is whether or not to refer this determination as to whether or not there's been a breach to the Privileges and Elections Committee or not.

Given that this does affect the Member for Terra Nova in a personal way, and as I ruled earlier in the week, I will grant him leeway to express his remarks, if he chooses to speak; but, if he does

speak I would ask him then to recuse himself, withdraw from this Chamber until we go to a vote.

With that, I will now start with the Member for Mount Scio.

Thank you.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Is that the right amount of time on the clock there, by the way? Is that correct?

MR. SPEAKER: I've been instructed as it's not a government motion, it's 20 minutes.

MR. KIRBY: Okay. Good, good.

Sort of like tabling documents. Because I would table, Mr. Speaker, the CBC story that I had there. As I noted yesterday, the Member had said that I was inaccurate in my assertion. I don't know a Ryan Cooke. I do know his stuff, and I think he's a journalist of fairly high integrity. So I don't see why Mr. Cooke would have misled anyone into believing that what he probably published was anything other than what he did.

I would just like to start off by saying, Mr. Speaker, I wish I had a dime for every person who's approached me in the past few days and said something to the effect of: Don't you crowd have anything better to do but to bicker amongst yourselves? And to which I said: These issues are serious allegations and we treat them as such, and that's why the House is devoting this much time. So folks who are watching the broadcast are wondering why we're using our time as we are, it's because these are very serious matters.

I won't speak for a lengthy period of time. I just wanted to sort of elaborate a little bit on what it is that I was accused of, what the implications are.

First, I want to state that I did vote against the motion yesterday. I guess I voted against the motion yesterday because I had information that other Members of the House of Assembly, unfortunately, didn't have, that was subsequently provided by the Commissioner for

Legislative Standards when he stood in the Clerk's chair and said that – what he did about there being no requirement for confidentiality in these reports and no direction provided by him to keep them confidential.

I sympathize with the Member for Topsail – Paradise who pointed out that he was unaware of certain details, and that's been our experience. I don't speak for the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, but that's been my experience over the past number of months that it was often very difficult to get any information, clarification or timelines from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, and I don't know why the Commissioner was either unable or refused to do that.

So that's why I think Members weren't aware, but I think – my argument is that of equal and fair treatment. And if one action by one Member, which is sort of synonymous with the action of the other, why one would be sent for punishment for contempt when the actions of the other is precisely the same.

Contempt is a serious matter – to be accused of contempt – but there are rules. I have contacted the Chair of the Privileges and Elections Committee to ask questions that I have about the process: what resources are available for our defence, what the procedure is, what the terms of reference are, who will be allowed to appear, when that will be and so on and so forth. So there are a lot of unanswered questions.

I wasn't able to come up any parliamentary precedents that I felt were very relevant and I'm not sure what parliamentary precedents the Commissioner for Legislative Standards may have consulted in making his determinations on these reports, but I assume we'll find that out at some point.

There are also legal implications, because the Leader of the Official Opposition stood up yesterday and he basically said – I think he actually said – that this Legislature, in this case, was judge and jury, and I hope not executioner, but various sort of austere implications of what he said.

In issues of civil content, when it comes to the law there are a number of rules. I'm not going to

prejudge the decisions or the determinations of the Privileges and Elections Committee; though I believe, in fact, that it's faulty to make the sort of determination that we – and now we, if this motion passes – but certainly that I would somehow be punished for something for which there were no rules governing.

There are basically four different elements that have to be proved with regard to the issue of contempt. The one thing is for certain that the rules have to be clear and they have to be unambiguous. You have to know what the rule is in order to break it, obviously. And the accused has to have a proper notice of what the rules are. The accused has to have been shown to have broken the rule that the accused was aware of and there must be proof of – well, in legal terms they would say mens rea, which is a fancy way in Latin of saying that you deliberately broke the rules.

So there were rules. You knew what the rules were because you were properly informed of them, and then you intentionally broke them. You did something that you knew was breaking the rules. So that's what the Committee will be tasked with.

I'm not going to belabour the process at all. I'll take my seat, but the essence of this motion is the point that I tried to make yesterday unsuccessfully, is that we all have a right to be treated equally under the rules of the Legislature. And yesterday, the Legislature – a majority of the Members voted to refer me to this Committee for this allegation of contempt, and if you're going to refer me to the Committee, then it is only fair for the Member who did exactly the same thing, months before I did, to be referred there as well, regardless of whether or not it makes any sense to do that. I know that sounds foolish but that's where we are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: If I could just ask you to –

MR. HOLLOWAY: Yes, all right.

MR. SPEAKER: I understand – for the guidance of the Member for Terra Nova, there's an issue with your microphone, so we may need you to just stand beside your colleague to your right.

Thank you.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Okay, I'll try again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to this motion. Unlike the Member opposite, as you can appreciate, I haven't had much time to prepare.

I'd like to take this House through the circumstances and the events leading up to those reports being provided to me on August 24. They came to me electronically by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards at 3:33 p.m. Shortly – and as I commented before the recess, shortly after four I started receiving – 4 p.m. I started receiving inquiries from media, various media, including NTV and CBC, and each acknowledging that both the Member for Mount Scio and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands had been found not guilty of any of the complaints and if I was to care to comment.

So I made two phone calls. I made one to you, Sir, and I also made one to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to express my deep concern that these reports were now out into the media. When I did my interview with the Commissioner back on July 19, as I was leaving that interview the Commissioner walked me to the door and he said I'd like for you, if you would, keep this interview confidential. I said okay.

When the reports went out to the media – as I said, I called the Commissioner and I said, how is that possible? And he said, well, the legislation only covers the Speaker, the Management Commission and his office. It does not cover either those that were being accused or those that had put in a complaint. So I said, okay; so I guess what was done today was okay. He said, well, what I'm saying is that the legislation doesn't cover it.

So the fact that the reports were out there – and the Member for Mount Scio just got up and said that we're both the same. I would argue to this House that we are not the same. I was a person who came forward with a complaint of harassment, intimidation and bullying against that Member. The reports were released prematurely, before they could come to this House, so now I was further being victimized by the people that released that report, and I assure you I did not do it at that time.

Having consulted with you, Mr. Speaker, having consulted with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, I was now in a protection-of-myself mode. The reports were out there. I was told by the Commissioner that I could talk about the details of those reports because they were already in the public domain.

So I differed in what the motion and what the Member for Mount Scio is saying: I was not in the same category. I was actually the person who was the complainant and now my reputation was being trashed in the media because the reports were already in the public domain.

So that motion that's brought today is inappropriate and I will not be supporting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers to this motion?

I would ask the Member to, first of all, withdraw in case there are further speakers.

I will summon the chimes when we go to the vote, Sir.

Any further speakers to this motion?

Are the House Leaders ready?

Is the House ready for the question?

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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: In my opinion the ayes have it.

This motion is carried.

Orders of the Day

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

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

I would call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to establish an all-party Select Committee on Democratic Reform.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this resolution. Actually, I believe it's an amendment to the resolution we're on now. So perhaps I'll have another opportunity to the main motion.

Mr. Speaker, I absolutely support this resolution. I absolutely support the concept of electoral and democratic reform. I think there are many things we can see improved in our democratic process here in the province and certainly one of the things that come to mind, and there are a whole list of things, but one of the things is the money; the money that's attributed to political campaigns and political parties.

I really believe we need to look at, for example, the amount of money that could be raised by a party for an election. I think that needs to be reduced. I think we need to look at the amount of money that can be raised by a candidate. I believe that amount should be reduced because – and we should be looking at the amount of money that can be given by corporations and unions, either to – if not eliminate totally, certainly to reduce those amounts.

I think if we did that we would certainly have a system where it would be more open, more accessible to members of the general public who are interested in running, who may not have the financial means to do so, may not have the connections in the business community, may not have the connections with large labour unions and so on to support them, that by limiting those amounts it makes it more achievable for an average citizen to put his or her name forward to run for public office. Really, that's what our democracy is supposed to be about. It's supposed to be about encouraging more people to put themselves forward, to offer themselves for public service.

When you look at the amounts of money that are spent in elections, as an example, a political party as such, they'll probably spend, I don't know, half a million dollars or more on a provincial campaign, probably a lot more than that. Do we really need big buses with some leader's face on it travelling all around the province? Do we really need all these TV and radio ads? As candidates, do we need a sign on every corner?

Why could we not in an election have a rule, for an example, that in a particular district in a particular community there would be one location designated in that particular town, if it's a small town, or one or two – maybe there might be four or five, or five or six if it's in a larger area, a larger city – where each candidate for each party or non-party would have a spot where they could put one sign, period, so that everybody knows these are the candidates? Why do we need these sign wars where we're going to have 50 signs on every roadway? Five or six signs on a corner? How often do you see that? You see a big sign; someone got to put a bigger sign. Then someone got to put two signs, so the next guy got to put three signs, and on and on it goes, spending thousands and thousands of dollars, for what?

All it's doing is that it's littering the environment. People don't like them, anyway. Totally not necessary. I don't know what we try to prove when we do that, but we've all done it. I've done it because that's the system as it is now, but we could eliminate that. We could be eliminating, like I said, the big TV ads, the radio ads, the print media ads.

Why should who gets elected be about who has the most brochures or the glossiest brochures? Why should that be a determining factor as to who you should be electing? We should be electing the best person to represent the district, and that person should be elected based on their qualifications, based on their community involvement, their proven commitment to their community, based on their individual merits.

We have leadership debates. We will have a provincial election; there will be there or four or whatever leadership debates that will be televised. They'll be televised on NTV, CBC, VOXM and so on, so the people – everybody – have the opportunity to listen to the debate, listen to what the party is, what the leaders have to say and make their determination as to who they want to vote for based on that platform.

It shouldn't be about, as I said, who can do the most advertising and who can spend the most money, who can buy the most votes through manipulating people's – manipulation is really what you're doing. Sort of creating this impression by all this signage and glossy brochures that you're the guy or you're the girl, you're the best person because you've got the most signs around. So that means somehow that you must be the winner, you're the best candidate. That's what it's all about. But should it be about that?

I believe it should be about electing the best person. So we can absolutely reduce the amount of money that needs to be spent by candidates, reduce the amount of money spent by parties, thus eliminating the need for these \$500 or \$5,000 a plate dinners. Eliminating the need for it. That is definitely a reform that could and should be implemented, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the use of all-party committees, particularly for review of legislation, how much better off would it be here in this House of Assembly, how much more informed would it be, how much would it do to eliminate some of the adversary that we see if we had a system whereby, before legislation hit the floor of the House, there was an all-party committee to review that legislation, to ask those questions? Not in a briefing a couple of hours before the House opens, but to have meaningful input into legislation. Because we all know – and we've

seen it, we have seen it, and we all know the reality is that if a piece of legislation comes before the floor of the House of Assembly – and it doesn't matter, this is not a slight on this administration. It's absolutely not –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate your protection from the House Leader.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying –

MR. A. PARSONS: Very simple (inaudible).

MR. LANE: You finished?

MR. A. PARSONS: O'Brien and Bosc.

MR. LANE: Thank you –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Continue, please.

Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We wonder why our democracy is in the state that it is with this type of attitude.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, or trying to say before I was interrupted – and I will grant the House Leader, when I said two or three hours, that's probably not fair. You probably get a briefing on a piece of legislation maybe the day before, probably the day before, and sometimes with very little notice, and you might have a half hour, maybe up to an hour, depending on the legislation, where they basically tell you, here's what it is. It's not a case of how would you like it to be? Do you have concerns with this legislation? Is there anything you think could be changed to make it better? No, here it is. Here's the way it's going to be.

Now, I hear the Member there chirping over from the Marystown area. I forget the name of the district, but anyway. What is it?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: There you go.

Anyway, I hear him chirping: well, you can amend it. Can you amend it, though? Can you really amend it? How many amendments actually pass through the House of Assembly? How many? I would suggest not a lot. Not a lot that I've seen. I've been here now for seven years. I have not seen very many amendments actually pass on legislation.

Generally, the way it works, is the government crafts the legislation and they bring it in and it goes through as crafted. Even if a Member on the Opposition points out something, and it's a legitimate – and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, I'd be the first to say, sometimes some of the points that get debated are a bit weak. You could argue sometimes being a bit political. I know that happens as well, Mr. Speaker, but I've also seen times in this House where there were very valid points raised by Opposition Members, very valid points, and things that could have been changed –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) during Muskrat Falls.

MR. LANE: My colleague back there says Muskrat Falls. Yes, and there were lots of amendments raised there – absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, there's lots of legislation where there are very valid points, very valid amendments, but they never go through. They never go through. Why don't they go through? Because there's never a will for it to go through. I don't know, is it because we didn't think of it, so therefore we can't bring it in? We'll look bad because you thought of something that we didn't think of.

I don't know what the reasons are. I would suggest that's part of it, but the point is if we had a system with an all-party committee system for legislation, there wouldn't have to be any one-upmanship. There wouldn't have to be any, you know, we never thought of it so therefore we're

not going to approve it even if it is a good idea, because it would all be dealt with through this Committee process where valid points would get flushed out and potentially, when the legislation hit the floor, it was generally something that everybody agreed with, and agreed with all the points or most of the points because it was dealt with before the camera started rolling.

So I think that's a very valid process that could be used. I understand at one point it was used. I'm told, before my time –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Well, I've been told that – I believe during the Wells administration, I do believe, somebody told me that during that administration there was a period of time when they used to do that and it stopped for some reason, but I think it's something that definitely needs to be revisited.

Mr. Speaker, there are also things we could be doing, such as recall legislation. Now recall legislation came up on this floor maybe a couple of years ago, I believe. I believe it was the former member for Mount Pearl North who actually introduced it as a private Member's resolution. It did not get passed.

I know there were some people at the time who were sort of questioning the timing of it, but I think it was a good idea. It's something that's being done in British Columbia. It does give the public an opportunity that if they elect somebody and that person is not representing their best interests in the House of Assembly, or they do something that's so egregious that the mass majority of the people in the district want that member removed, there is a process to do just that.

Now, I have heard people who are sort of counter to that. They'll say: oh, my goodness, if we done that there would be by-elections every other week; it would cost taxpayers a fortune. Absolutely untrue, because the process to actually have somebody removed in terms of the organization and the door to door, to every door in the district to get people who are actually willing to sign a document at every single door, or not every single door, but at least 55 per cent or whatever the case might be of the doors,

people are willing to sign their names and organize it to do that, the chances of that ever actually happening where people would actually get removed, it could happen but it would be very rare.

One thing it would do, though, is that if somebody at least tried to do that, even if they weren't successful, I think it would send a message to that Member and to all Members that they are accountable to the public not just once every four years – not just once every four years. So I think that's another thing that we certainly could be looking at.

When we talk about finances and so on, I think that should apply to political party leadership races and so on and such. I think there should be better, stricter time frames in place for reporting of election contributions and so on to the Chief Electoral Officer and a quicker process in terms of letting the public know what donations were made, not a year later.

I think we need to look at conflict of interest legislation that we have. I think that needs to be reviewed to see where we stand in that regard. This whole idea of the so-called conflict walls or – what is it – Chinese walls, a term I never heard of until about a year ago. There are a lot of people that would feel that, if you're deciding to run for elected office, then you should sever any business you have with the government; and even if you put it in a blind trust, there should be no additional business with the government.

Because we all know we can talk about blind trusts, but what is a blind trust? I assign somebody else to look after my business interests. That could be my best friend, it could be a family member or whatever. They never talk at the dinner table, never talk at the golf course, never have any conversations about anything?

So there are a lot of people that question this whole process of blind trust, but certainly, if you set up a blind trust, there should be something there that even if it's in a blind trust, that while you are in office you can no longer do any business, certainly no new business, with government. So this is something else which a lot of people have raised with me.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are numerous things. I really think that, you know, we need to do a better job, although I have to say that with our new Speaker and so on the last year or so, I have seen an improvement in decorum. I have seen an improvement in decorum – and the Speaker before him, by the way. And the Speaker before him; I got to say, in fairness, the last two Speakers. When I said Speaker, I was forgetting about the other one. But in fairness, the last two Speakers have done a good job at improving decorum, but I think there's always room for more improvement.

The issues we're dealing with now is all part of our whole democratic process, and I haven't spoken to that yet. I don't intend on getting into the details of any of it, to be honest with you. I find this whole process, even of dealing with the harassment issues that we're dealing with now, I find it totally – what would be a good word. I think it's disgusting, I really do.

To be debating personal details about Members and smearing it all over the media, he-said-she-said, everything else, that is something that needs to be improved. I know we're all committed to working on that, but nowhere else, at no other workplace there would be a system in place that would be totally private and confidential, and here we're debating it all in the media, debating it in the House of Assembly, every little sordid detail, and I think that is wrong. And that's something else we need to work on improving, and I'm sure we are going to. I'm sure we're going to.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess, in clueing up for now, I think there are many things – those are just a few – but there are many things we could be doing to make our system more open, more transparent, more accountable, making it open for more citizens to engage in the political process, to make it affordable for people to get engaged in the political process, to promote more unity and collegiality amongst all Members, regardless of what side of the House it is, in working together; not an us and them.

There are a lot of things we can do, we should do, and I will certainly be supporting this motion to hopefully get us there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I just want to – again, I'm not going to engage in a debate, because I'm glad the Member stood up and contributed his positions and thoughts on it, and that's what we do want to encourage in this debate.

I just want to correct one inaccuracy. The Member said, he talked about getting briefings a couple of hours before you go into the House and debate legislation, and that is simply not true. That is not true. It did happen in the past, but I can guarantee you that any piece of legislation that's been in this House in the last three years, you didn't get a briefing and then do the legislation on the same day.

So for the Member to say that, that is not true. I need to correct the record. I wasn't going to do it on a point of order because he has every right to stand up and speak. I'm not going to get into – we may agree or disagree on points, but that point is not true. I'm putting that out there now just to correct the record, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

Thank you.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of –?

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Under what?

MR. LANE: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to very quickly respond to the Member (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Are you raising a – sorry; I ask the Member, is he raising a point of order?

MR. LANE: Point of order (inaudible), section 45.

Forty-nine, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the minister's comments. I would say if he listened to what I said, after I made that point I then went on to say, you know what, that's not fair in me saying that. We actually do get it the day before. I did correct that. So I don't want to mislead anybody about that point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: No point of order. It's just a point of clarification between two Members.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks for clarifying that up. It was good we worked our way through that, it's important.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to rise and speak to the motion. Actually, this is an amendment we're on, but I think it's important to just mention what the original motion was: BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to establish an all-party Select Committee on Democratic Reform.

The amendment that was proposed to the resolution regarding the establishment of an all-party Select Committee on Democratic Reform to move that the resolution be amended to delete the words: urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to, and be replaced with: Be It Resolved that the House of Assembly establish an all-party Select Committee on Democratic Reform.

So what that does is bring it back to the Legislature who would be driving the agenda on the particular committee rather than government itself. It would be a collective will and motion of the House and of the 40 representatives here to drive that all-party Select Committee on Democratic Reform.

We know through the democratic process and through the parliamentary setup here in the Legislature and with the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are various all-party committees. For various times in our history they have been used, some are used quite regularly, others are not, but over the past

number of years we've certainly seen the ability to do that.

I know in our time, with our administration there was a recommendation to have an all-party committee related to mental health. I think all concerned certainly recognized the type of work was done at that particular time on a very important issue, and still a very important issue facing our province today in terms of mental health and how we deal with that in regard to a policy, be innovative in policy in terms of recognizing certain mental health, as any other health, and the importance of it and the overall health and well-being of people.

In that committee there was ability for – I know some of the Members of the Legislature travelled, went to various parts of our province and reached out as an all-party committee of the Legislature, to hear from people, to hear from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to hear from physicians, to hear others in the medical community, and certainly to hear from the various advocacy groups as part of that committee, and to hear from mental health professionals, as I said, and for people who experienced mental health and those that could be experiencing it today, those that have experienced it in the past and what that has been for them in their daily lives and how they were able to access appropriate care, or not able to access appropriate care; therefore, how that information can be fed into that All-Party Committee on Mental Health that went around the province and to legislators and law makers, and how they can bring that information back here and use all of that to generate new legislation, new policy that addresses some of the concerns.

Out of that process, the legislative committee – I know there were a number of recommendations made. The prior minister of Health, and current minister as well, looked at engraining those in and driving them through policy developments in health care. I guess that's a classic example, or a very good example of how an all-party committee of the Legislature can work.

When we look at that overall from democratic reform, it's fundamental because democracy in the simplest form means people are heard and people have a right to participate. That's what

it's about in regard to democratic reform and getting people's views, being able to intertwine them in decisions we make here, or discussions we have here is fundamental to democracy, and it's certainly tied to this particular motion.

There are many aspects to – you know, we talked about democratic reform. I heard my colleague speak earlier in regard to areas related to financing, in regard to politics and the rules around that. There are issues in regard to the functioning of the House, and in regard to actual committees and how they function.

We've just gone through a process and started some time ago – and I have the ability to sit on the Privileges and Elections Committee of the House here with colleagues on both sides, and to deal with – one of the issues we've been dealing with over the past number of months, dealing with harassment.

We were struck through a private Member's resolution here in the House, and the Privileges and Elections Committee was given that job to do in regard to looking at other jurisdictions, looking at current practices here, looking at the realities of the day and a modern and fresh approach and a progressive approach to the workplace, like this House, as any other workplace, and how we can make it the environment we want it to be in regard to everybody having the environment they can work in, they should work in and that everybody feels comfortable in doing that. So that's another example of a committee doing the work that needs to be done and ties into democratic reform.

What this motion, or the amendment we're speaking to, looks to have the House initiate a select committee on democratic reform to look at some of the things I've talked about but looking in a broad sense where else we need to go and what else would be included in democratic reform.

Now, I understand the current administration in their original 2015 platform did speak to the importance of democratic reform, and I guess we're here now approaching the fourth year of the mandate. We're here in the Legislature speaking to democratic reform, striking the select committee and moving forward with

initiatives to meet the agenda they laid out for the people of the province in 2015. Whether we'll get there or not before the end of this particular term, four year term, we would hope we will as we move through now and debate it.

If we strike this committee looking into early 2019, we could look at striking some specific legislation, bringing it in in the spring session where we can look at bringing that here to develop that legislation and to start it to meet the agenda this government has talked about. So we hope to do that and we can start that process in 2019 and can bring some concrete evidence to this motion as we bring it through the House of Assembly here, which I'm sure – and the speakers I've heard to date on the debate, today and prior days, certainly seem to support the motion as presented.

I can't presumptively indicate what may happen, but I would think that most in the Legislature would support it, and all – and then if we do have that opportunity to do it before recess, before Christmas, certainly there will be an opportunity as we move forward into 2019.

We have set elections in this province in October of 2019. We could do some legislative changes on various topics that are looked at by the select committee and have that legislation for the spring session, and have some changes made as we head into the fall election of 2019.

Other areas the select committee certainly would want to look at – I talked about current things that are happening now in regard to a new harassment policy, workplace environment, all of those kinds of things. Even things like the kind of voting system we have.

The federal government has talked about proportional representation. Our models have said first past the post. The federal government, certainly in its mandate as well, indicated the last election in 2015 for the federal government will be the last first past the post; but they've pulled back on that and had indicated we were going through a proportional representation model, but has since rescinded on that. I assume the federal election in 2019 will again be first past the post. Nevertheless, we would look at – or the select committee could look at other models and other jurisdictions around the world.

Many European countries do have proportional representation where it's looked at distinctively in regard to regions and the amount of popular votes you receive and how that popular vote could translate into a number of seats. In our current system, the popular vote – while recognized at the end of the day, the popular vote is divided by a number of individual districts and based on how many of those districts you win, and you had the majority, you get the right to form a particular government.

Some would argue it's more democratic if we have a process – maybe a process that allows for proportional representation but, as well, maintains some of the current system we have. And that also exists, too – some of a hybrid in terms of jurisdictions and what they have in regard to representation, and it all gets – the democracy and people's views, and looking at other jurisdictions and other examples that are out there. So that would be another – of the select committee and what it would do in terms of looking at something, and how we have our democracy and our representations today, and how we send people to the Legislature to represent them.

That ties to minority governments and the ability to have minority governments; how they would work and what would arise from something like proportional representation or a hybrid system. Again, it's an issue this committee would look at and have consultations on, and would draw some conclusions or recommendations.

The other one that's important and we hear a lot of discussion on is modernizing election financing rules, certainly about political donations from corporations, from unions. I know the federal Conservative Party got away from the corporate donations and went to a set individual contribution and donation where it's much more open and transparent in regard to who's making the donations and it's coming from a single individual, as opposed to significant amounts for a number of companies, corporations, unions, all of that type of thing.

The question then and debate would be, and discussion would be, whether there'd be public subsidy for political parties to replace fundraising from corporations or unions, or a subsidy phased in over a period of time to ease

the transition. Because right now, as we know through Elections Newfoundland and Labrador, the cost and the expense of the overall election, and some of that, the administration of it is certainly run and paid by the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. When you look at individual candidates that run, there are rules in place under the *Elections Act* in regard to how much votes you would garner, and based on that, if you hit a certain threshold, you get a return and investment to you on your actual campaign.

I guess what we're looking at here, which would be a fundamental question in regard to democratic reform, is if we take away corporate donations, union donations, then it becomes an issue of – with that taken out – where does the funding come? The suggestion would be, or one of the obvious points would be that it would come from the public purse. So that would mean the amount that would be invested, or subsidies provided to run election campaigns for candidates, for registered political parties would come from the public purse.

So that would have to be a debate on whether that's where the public would want to go. Would they rather it still come out of corporate and union funding, or would you want it more coming from the public purse? But a committee like this that's struck could certainly hear from the populous and from the residents, and we could have that discussion and bring recommendations back here to the House to be discussed.

Through all of that, I mean there are rules on spending by parties and candidates and others, for pre-writ period as opposed to writ period. When you have set elections there's some understanding of when that's coming. It was a previous administration of ours that brought that in in regard to set periods, where there's an understanding of when that period is going to arise when you go to the polls. That's related to parties and candidates.

There are also rules you can look at in regard to advertising, signage. Social media today, the past number of years, it's been such a large component to any kind of marketing or election campaigns and there are rules on that. Is there modernization needed on that to get our electoral rules and democratic reform up to those

particular mechanisms that are now in place and are used pretty significantly in provincial campaigns, national campaigns and certainly internationally?

Rules on third-party advocacy and advertising, what roles – there's some entity out there that possess significant dollars and the ability and expertise to lobby against a particular party, any particular party, and/or a particular candidate. What should their ability be to influence a particular election through marketing, through ads, through various avenues that are available to them?

I mentioned social media. So if we have the money to effect that, to lobby, to advocate – you know we see it significantly in the United States in regard that there are actually advocates that are allowed and lobbyists allowed to direct funds and significant funds to a various party or a various candidate to ensure that their desires for particular legislation or laws are adhered to. That's a significant step from where we are in this country and where we are in this province. So such discussions and a select committee could certainly view that and look at that as well.

Public opinion poll rules as well. We look at various times of election times, when polls are released, near elections or very close to elections looking at how you make that a playing field that upholds the principles of democracy to make sure that there's not undue influence at a particular time or someone doesn't have that ability to release polls and how they're released.

The other big issue that many jurisdictions in Canada face, and certainly this province we've seen it before, and we often see it in a municipal level as well, is encouraging people to vote and how we engage people to make sure that they engage in the fundamental right that we have to cast a ballot. We've seen, over the past number of years, some of that fall off in regard to people wanting to exercise that right. Some people say our youth are not as engaged as they should be. Myself, I have two young people – my wife and I – 21 and 19 years old and always try to impress on them the importance of engaging in the process.

You always encourage them to come to where you are politically, but you understand their ability. Oftentimes, we have very interesting discussions in regard to views and how they see the world and how they want to see their future and what's important to them and what their ideals and values are. So we have great discussions and sometimes they don't reflect the ads, but that's a good thing. But, at the end of the day, it's a process to try and encourage them that, no matter what, get out and exercise your right.

I know as an elected official over 11 years, I've had the opportunity to have a by-election and three general elections. I know I talk to people at their doors and I'm fortunate a lot of people did say we support your candidacy, support your party. But, at times, you meet people that say – and I've seen it in past by-elections where you go knock on doors and people say oh, I don't vote, or I don't think I'm going to vote.

I always do say – and I make a point of it – well, they may say I don't know I'm not going to vote for you or for your party, and I'm not sure I'm going to vote. I always try and encourage and say: Well, that's fine, but I really think you should get out and exercise your vote and think about the candidates. If you need to talk to somebody, go out and talk to them. Look at some of the information they put out and get out and cast your ballot for whoever it is and participate. Because, if you don't, that's fundamental to us as a country and province that we have that right and that's what democracy is about. Once you rescind that right, or don't avail of it, I think it causes problems societally and it puts us on a path where I don't think we need to go. So, it's important to always encourage people to exercise their right to do that.

We have had issues in low voter turnout. We continue to work on that and a committee like this will allow us to do that. There's always discussion about the voting age, what it should be. Should it be lowered? There are jurisdictions where it is lower. Those type of things need to be looked at again.

Our education system in terms of our schooling system and people being encouraged – I remember a few years back, in high school, we had a course called democracy. It went through

provincially the local governance infrastructure and how it worked, and also looked at a national scale. So, that's about exposure to our youth and an understanding of how important it is.

But getting them to engage in issues of concerns to them in their lives, whether it's post-secondary, whether it's about their career, whether it's a type of province or type of country you want to have, engaging them in those ideas, in those concerns, which many are, and allows them as well to be engaged in the democratic process and to vote about issues that are important to them.

Fixed-vote elections are another issue; we talked about that. We have that in our province today. In actual, here in the House different functions in regard to – they often refer them to whip votes or non-whip votes and how duly elected Members of the House who are part of political parties when a whip vote would be called and when not. So, it speaks to the democratic part of that as well.

Mr. Speaker, my time is soon winding up here, but I do want to thank you for the opportunity to vote on this motion. I think it's very important. I said the current administration brought this in and recommended in 2015 in their mandate. I'd really like to see this met and dealt with through legislation and various components of it in the next sitting of the House so we can see some real changes as we move forward to going to the polls in possibly late 2019.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to get up and speak on democratic reform. As we all know, this is something that's been talked about many times. It was in the Liberal's red book in 2015. Our current leader has spoken out on democratic reform and the need to change it. I know the NDP has as well – the Third Party.

So it's not a new topic; it's a topic that's been out in the public domain for a long time and there's a lot of talk about it. Sometimes there's a

lot of good talk and a lot of good intentions, but we seem to always find ourselves spinning our wheels and we end up right back to where we started. Sometimes that's not bad; sometimes it's not good either. In this case here, you can't go too extreme either way. You can make a lot of democratic reform changes and a lot of those changes would be good. I guess you have to do it in a balanced approach too, because too much change sometimes can cause problems as well.

Sometimes listening to people speak, and my colleague was just speaking and I know other Members were speaking, we tie politics sometimes – politics was always an honourable profession back – I remember my younger years, elected officials, MHAs or MPs they were very respected in your communities – mayors. And as time has gone on – and I still think for the most part the respect is still there, but it's not where it needs to be. The image that's portrayed by elected officials right across the board and as a whole, if you're an elected official, no matter what level it is, there's an image problem.

I don't think anyone here in this House could argue that, and I think anyone on the street will tell you the same thing. We all try individually – I know we do – we go to our districts outside. It's not always an election every year. When you get elected, you have four years to go and represent your districts. I'm sure every Member here carry themselves in the best fashion they see possible and they can do in their own respective districts and do what they feel is right.

But that message is not getting out to our electorate, Mr. Speaker. We're falling short as a group. I know individually, some individual cases, and probably as a group, maybe our Legislature, maybe our rules need to change to change some of the public perception, but there are also a lot of behaviours need to change with individuals to change that as well.

You know, I'm not opposed to healthy debate. I think it's good. I mean, that's part of our Legislature. We have our to and fro, and I have no issue with that. We get up on any given day, on any given debate, and I don't mind engaging with Members across the way. Sometimes we engage each other among your own groups on issues that you feel strongly on, and the same applies across the other way. I accept that and I

think most Members accept it, but unfortunately, over the last number of months and probably the last year especially, there have been a lot of things transpire that hasn't given me a good feeling. I'm sure a lot of Members, that's not a good feeling, because when I speak, I think you can speak – we all feel somewhat the same way.

You know, you go around and you go around and you read the news and you try take yourself outside this so-called bubble. I learned from a good friend of mine, a former, long-time Member in this House of Assembly, Terry French. And I was good friends with him and we're still close friends, obviously. He used to always say to me: You know, get yourself out of the bubble; why are they saying outside the bubble? You can't be in the bubble. And he did a good job of it, to his credit, and he was a good politician.

That was something that I took with me. I took a lot of things and learned from them over the years, and that's one thing I always stay true to. I keep saying it, my colleagues can tell you. I always say: Go and talk to the coffee shops. Go up to Dominion and talk to the gentlemen at the counter. Go talk to the guys that are out in the shed. Ask them what they think of us. What do they think of elected office? What's their view?

Sometimes, if you don't want to hear the answer, you shouldn't ask the question, but I ask the question and some of the answers sometimes are not so pretty. But I accept that and I respect it and I'm looking for that answer. I want to know what they think. And it's incredible the views you'll get from those people. That's taking yourself outside the bubble.

There are times it might look bad on the governing party; there are times it looks bad on everyone in here. We don't all walk free of this image that we portray. Because sometimes you may think it's being portrayed by one individual or one party, but when you're on the outside – outside this bubble – we all look the same.

So if we make decisions and we go and we speak on issues and we feel high and mighty, we feel strong, we want to get out there and beat the drum, sometimes it's a reflection on this entire House. That's a reality we all should live with and take every day.

I mean, I'm not perfect; I'm a very flawed individual. I think most of the people in this House are flawed, if we're going to be honest. I'll be the first to profess it. But I think, overall, I consider myself to be a decent human being that can admit your faults.

When I got elected, when I ran to be elected, I used to always wonder. People, knock on their door and they'd, like, why are you doing this? What brings you to run for politics? What's your interest? And I always used to tell them that I feel I can make a difference. I've learned, I've been through this process, I've watched it from the sidelines, I've been in the back rooms and I feel that I can make a difference. I feel I can stand out in front now. I've got enough experience behind me that no longer I got to be in the back rooms. I'm ready to stand on the front room and do what I feel I can do, and do what's good for my community, what's good for my district.

In our critic roles, we're not the ministers but we challenge the ministers in our individual critic roles to do what's right for the province. And we're not always right. We argue on policy sometimes; we argue on principle. Sometimes we'll argue on the fact that we may feel very strongly on something but it's a mixed view out there, but you got to have a stand.

I'm one of them believers, Mr. Speaker, that you need to stand for something, and you don't always have to be in agreement with the groups, even your own groups. I'm a believer you should stand for something. Stand up and be counted. Whatever your belief is, and that may be offside with every single person around you, but you should stand up for what you believe in.

I believe – and I was taught a long time ago, and I've stuck to that principle my entire life, and I will continue to do so – people will respect that. They won't agree with you, they won't look at you and they won't say – they'll look at you, though, they'll respect you. They're not going to say I agree, you're right or wrong; they may say you're wrong more than anything, but they will respect what you're doing.

Because there's something – and I say this to a lot of individuals, and I always say that politics is not an easy game for nobody. It's a

challenging game. You walk in, you know, you lose your confidentiality, you lose your privacy, you lose your individuality, you can no longer go in and just be the regular Joe Blow on the street. You lose that, and I found that to be somewhat of a strange feeling because I liked the fact that I could go around – and I knew a lot of people – but I was my own individual.

Now I'm no longer that. You're representing the district, you are their Member, and you got to carry yourself – you try to be the same, and you feel you're the same, and I think I'm the same, but you know there's a burden, there's a responsibility everywhere you go, you got that responsibility, and I take that serious.

So when I ran for politics and I got elected – I was fortunate enough to get elected – I remember one thing I said at the time to people that were close to me, I said I'm going in with integrity, and my goal is to leave with integrity. I'm only three years in and I think, for the most part, I'm accomplishing that, and I'll continue to be that way.

I'll have my debates with the Members opposite, and good, healthy debates, and we'll have our disagreements; but I think most individuals on that other side of the House can attest there's not a lot of bad blood. I don't feel I got a lot of enemies over there. No doubt, you won't get along with everybody, that's life. You put 40 individuals in a room from right across the province, all different backgrounds, all different interests, all different views, we're not all going to like each other or agree, for the most part. I feel the same way about Members opposite. So we are doing this for the right reasons. I think that most Members on the opposite side will say most of the things I just said. They probably agree with most I said because they feel the same way.

How you reach that goal, everyone got different paths to get there. Democratic reform is a nice word and most people, when you say that word, will glaze over because what is it? What, these committees? You'll flick on CPAC, their station, the parliamentary committees in Ottawa. There are a lot of serious issues discussed in those committee meetings. I mean, to keep your attention span any longer than 10 or 15 minutes is a challenge, the topics; but it's a very

important procedure of our parliamentary process.

That's good in theory, but most people will look at it and say: Okay, yeah, whatever. What they really look at is a lot of the same things I just said, a lot of the same things we've been talking about here. It's the political financing. I know a Member said earlier \$500-a-plate dinners. It's the pay-to-play system sometimes people question with politics. Someone mentioned about all these election signs, a popularity contest and the cost involved.

All that being said, and you could go down the line, it's party politics and how the governing party controls everything and the Opposition parties have to take what they can get. And everyone is entitled to their view. I know I was asked just shortly after I got elected one thing you'd like to see. One thing I remember I said and I still got the article on it: a more collaborative approach. I understand that government got a mandate; they were elected by the people. We all get that and that's their prerogative, but a more collaborative approach.

We sit here in this House of Assembly and I learned my way through the three years here. We get in the Committee stage. So we feel strongly about a certain piece of legislation, we don't like certain clauses or aspects of that legislation, so negotiations will happen between respective sides and try to come to some kind of compromise. If it's not there, we get in the Committee stage and we keep hammering away on our points one speaker after another, almost like a perseverance, to try to see if the other side – who will blink first. We're trying to get the few changes.

Ultimately, we feel we're making a piece of legislation better, fairer, more inclusive to a group that's being affected. I know we had the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* that we had very strong opinions on certain aspects of. Now, eventually, we got some of those changes through.

So when you're looking at democratic reform, maybe that's something that should go to a Committee, and these could be agreed upon in a separate arena with all parties involved, then you could come to the House. It saves a lot more

time, and you probably would get more work done in the House.

Some of this stuff – no one on either side are in total disagreement of. It's just, philosophically, we feel something that the governing side doesn't. We're the Opposition; that's our role. And people expect us to hold government accountable. But on government's side, they got an agenda, and they want to get their bills through, their legislations through and their commitments through, and that's respectful. But we got to come to some kind of compromise.

Sometimes we sit here in the House, and we'll get up – and speakers and you and other speakers will say: relevance, stick to the point. And we get that, too, but we feel very strongly on that particular issue that we're standing up and we're holding our ground and we're not letting it pass through Committee because we want this piece or this clause changed or this sentence changed. That's not wrong either, but some of the time we waste – and I should never say waste, but some of the times that go in the House could be used better.

Our time could be used more wisely and some of these Committee stages – I know other Members in this House have asked for that too, and I don't see that being a bad thing. It's something that probably should be given a lot of consideration, and I'm sure it will be in the whole democratic reform.

Another point our leader has said a lot of times is honesty in politics. I know it's thrown back and forth across the floor, sometimes there are barbs. The fact of the matter is, that's probably one of the fundamental problems or fundamental flaws out there on the public domain now. When you look at politicians, they don't trust us.

They look like: How can we trust you? Sure, you're a politician. That's been said to me many times, and I'll quickly come back and say: Well, I hope you can trust me because I feel I am a trustworthy person. Just because you're a politician doesn't mean you're not to be trusted, but that's their impression.

When I knock on doors – we go around in these by-elections. We've had a couple now and I guess there's another one coming up. People,

when you knock on their door, they'll say, like you said – and I know my colleague from Ferryland said: I don't vote. I'll always say when I knock on their door and I see – you can see the engagement. You knock on their door and it's either, no, I'm Liberal, or they put their hand out to shake your hand or they're looking at their boots. Everyone here in this House knows what it means.

I'll always say, if I feel they're in-between: Do you vote? And if they say no, I'll ask why. I'll tell them: I would love you to vote for me, or love you to vote for the candidate I'm probably knocking for, but I think you should vote. I'm a firm believer that voting, and you exercise your right to vote, is the foundation of our society we live. I vote in every opportunity I get, no matter what the election. I've always been that way, long before I ever got in politics.

My children at 18 years old – when they turned 18 they've been taught the same thing, and they continue to do the same thing, Mr. Speaker. It is a foundation that – it's unfortunate that we get 50 per cent turnouts, but a lot of the reason we're getting 50 per cent turnouts and lower sometimes, unfortunately, is we all need to collectively do a better job. We all need to do a better job.

I think that – you get these campaigns attracting females, attracting women to politics. It was a big campaign on it last year in the municipal election. A lot of females got elected on St. John's city council down there. Up in my own community of CBS, we had females elected. I think across the board there was a high number, and I thought that was great.

If we're going to want to elect more females, there needs to be a lot of people – and I won't include everybody in this conversation – a lot of people need to take a good hard look in the mirror. Without getting into details, and we're going to debate this stuff down in the next week, few weeks, there are a lot of things that has happened in this House that females have been attacked on both sides. And that's something us, as a group, need to take – whoever's involved with this needs to take account.

We look at attracting individuals, women and others to run for us, sometimes you got to rise

above to a certain level. That's the only way we're going to get this better. We have to really, as I said earlier, stand up and be counted. Don't waffle; don't sit down. If you got a view you should express it.

When we get into debating on these reports, no doubt, that'll come out then. That somewhat can be tied to the whole issue of democratic reform because, ultimately, it's engaging people, engage the public. We want to see higher voter turnouts. We want to see more people put their name in the ring. We want to see more candidates coming up, female candidates. Enjoy the process.

Until we provide a better process or we provide a better arena, we're going to have trouble doing that. Some of this stuff we'll get into, we'll talk – I said earlier – of some of the politics that goes back and forth. It's unnecessary some of the stuff that happens, but it's unfortunate. Some of the stuff is accepted. I think that's the point that I sit back sometimes and I wonder. Like what we accept to be okay – by not saying something at times I guess we're saying it's okay.

We just had a by-election in Windsor Lake. Just one key point came out to me, and it wasn't from me, we noticed it, but when we went to the doors – we knocked on doors of people and they were laughing. There were other times they probably laughed at the previous administration doing the same thing. They laughed at the announcements coming out in the middle of a by-election.

Let the chips fall where they may, have rules in place, shut it down, don't be targeting a certain district. Let the voter assess the individual, the party of their choice, whatever their case may be, let both camps go out, do their job. At the end of the day, the votes will be counted. My line is – and by the way, I'll say it clearly. I lost an election before I won one, and I said the same thing when I lost as when I won, but it was nice when I won: the voter is never wrong. The voter is never wrong. Whether you agree with their decision or not, that depends which side you fall out on.

The voter is always right. In this case, you learn a lot from the voter. As I said earlier, when you go to the shed and you go to the local Tim

Hortons, the general public will tell you, give you the best advice you will ever be given and it will take you outside that bubble. Again, I can't stress that enough, because sometimes a big problem with politicians and parliaments all over this country and the world is they get caught up in a so-called bubble. They lose track of reality. Without getting into that, too, Mr. Speaker, we see that happen very often around our own province.

People lose touch with the reality of what they've really set out to do. People mark an X for you, whether they like you or they like your party, or they don't like the other party, the other candidate, whatever their choice is they elected you and they expect you to go in and represent them to the best of your ability and do the things they want you to do and make the changes, lobby on their behalf. At the end of the day, you may not solve all their problems but if you're representing them, they want you to do it with dignity and respect, but they'll also – one of the big things is they never want you to lose sight of who you are. The people who elect you, elected you because they liked what they seen at the door.

This was another piece of advice I was given. They said, if you're getting voted because they like who's on their doorstep, do not ever change that person that went to the doorstep. Don't ever change who you are. Stay true to yourself. Go in with integrity, come out with integrity. If everyone used those very basic principles, Mr. Speaker, and applied them to this House and applied them to how we operate, I think we'd make this parliament a much better place and the people of this province would be much more supportive of everything we do.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, I'm going to call the question on this amendment. Before we do that, I just want to read the amendment. The House has been adjourned for a while since the amendment was made.

The main motion is on the Order Paper, today's Order Paper. The amendment is:

That the resolution be amended to delete the words urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to, and be replaced with: BE It RESOLVED that the House of Assembly establish an All-Party Select Committee on Democratic Reform.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the amendment?

All those in favour?

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Mr. Lester, Ms. Rogers, Mr. Lane.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

CLERK: Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Warr, Mr. Bernard Davis, Ms. Haley, Mr. Letto, Mr. Browne, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Finn, Ms. Parsley, Mr. King, Mr. Dean, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Holloway.

The ayes: 8; the nays: 20.

MR. SPEAKER: The ayes: 8, and the nays: 20.

The amendment has been defeated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on the resolution. Further, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded

by the Minister of Natural Resources that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House does now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: The House is now adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

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