



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

THIRD SESSION

Number 58

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

Tuesday

March 19, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit strangers, please.

Order, please!

I'd like to welcome all Members back to this House of Assembly. We have some special guests that I'd also like to identify today. In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Dr. Noreen Golfman, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) of Memorial University who will be the subject of a Member's statement this afternoon.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome William Tetford, Winnie Walsh, Bonita Hussey and Raymond Hussey from Spaniard's Bay. Mr. Tetford and Ms. Hussey will be the recognized in a Member's statement today.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Andy Wells, former Chair of the Public Utilities Board and also the former Mayor of the City of St. John's.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we will hear from the Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl North, Placentia West - Bellevue, Cape St. Francis, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mount Pearl's Frosty Festival – now in its 37th

year. This year the festival was held from February 6 to 17.

The largest winter festival in Atlantic Canada doesn't just happen. It is the constant dedication of the great network of more than 500 volunteers and organizers that makes this event the highlight for the City of Mount Pearl every year.

This year we saw a wonderful 12 days of 80-plus events and all reports indicate that this was the most successful and well-attended Frosty Festival to date. There was something for everyone to enjoy. Thirty-seven years is truly remarkable and the festival clearly shows the wonderful sense of community that exists in Mount Pearl.

To the sponsors, boards of directors, community groups, community partners, hundreds of volunteers and all organizations and businesses who supported the event, I thank you. I thank you all for what you've done over the past 12 months to make the 12 days of Frosty Festival 2019 such a success.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in thanking and congratulating the 37th Annual Frosty Festival on its tremendous success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a fierce advocate and fearless leader, a strong woman from the Town of Terrenceville, Mrs. Rebecca Hickey.

Rebecca has been a lifelong resident of Terrenceville. The pride she has in her hometown speaks for itself. She's an advocate of good services and infrastructure, strong health care and celebrating tourism in the region. She has served on the town council for over 30 years, including many as mayor. She was re-elected to council in 2017 municipal election and continues to serve her fellow residents.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, today she is celebrating her 79th birthday and she's celebrating it by being in

St. John's, along with her colleagues in the town council, meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs to advocate for issues concerning their town. That's her idea of a good birthday, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Earlier today, I had the opportunity to present Rebecca with her certificate of recognition and thanks for her years of service to the people and to the Town of Terrenceville.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in showing our appreciation, and, of course, in wishing councillor and former Mayor Rebecca Hickey a happy 79th birthday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate this year's Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador Ambassador Cassandra McGrath. Cassandra is a 13-year-old girl from Torbay and is a student at Holy Trinity High. Her energy and enthusiasm has come from a result of programs at Easter Seals.

Cassandra wants to be an advocate and a role model for persons with disabilities in this province, as well to increase support for the organization and to encourage more persons with disabilities to become part of Easter Seals.

As a member of this year's wheelchair basketball team, she was the glue of the team, helping to keep everyone together and focused. Cassandra message is even though you have a disability, you can still have fun and enjoy life.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in wishing Cassandra McGrath all the best as this year's Easter Seals ambassador, and I am sure she will be a great spokesperson for Easter Seals.

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 am delighted to congratulate Dr. Noreen Golfman on being named Woman of the Year by the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists for advancing gender equality in the arts.

A pioneer for women in the film industry, Noreen is the founding director of the St. John's International Women's Film Festival. The festival is highly successful, attracting women from all over the world to screen their films in our province. The festival will celebrate its 30th year this October.

Noreen also sits as the vice-chair of the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation and chair of the board of the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting. Since 2011, she has co-chaired the board of directors of Business and the Arts NL.

Noreen is a full professor in the Department of English who currently serves as the provost and vice-president (academic) of Memorial University.

I ask the hon. Members of this House to join with me in congratulating Dr. Noreen Golfman on receiving ACTRA's Woman of the Year Award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Today I would like to recognize two outstanding citizens of Spaniard's Bay. William Tetford enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces in 1960, serving with the United Nations in Egypt and then in Germany with NATO forces. Bill returned to Canada in 1971 when he was stationed in Gagetown, New Brunswick where

he served at a medical unit prior to being honourably discharged in 1973.

He has received numerous service awards such as the Queens Jubilee medal, United Nations peacekeeping medal, NATO service medal, Queen's commemorative of Canada and more. He is still an active, dedicated Royal Canadian Legion member in Spaniard's Bay.

Bonita Hussey has become a local YouTube sensation through her NL traditional cooking show: Bonita's Kitchen. It all started when her son, who was living in another province, asked her to share a recipe with him on YouTube for homemade bread. It turns out her son wasn't the only viewer who took interest.

Then in 2014, Bonita and her husband, Raymond, retired from their jobs and moved back to Newfoundland and Labrador from the Northwest Territories. Ever since, they've been cooking up recipes, working on recipes, videos and a cookbook to promote their YouTube channel.

I ask all hon. Members to certainly congratulate these residents.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege of attending the 63rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women as part of the Canadian delegation. I had the opportunity to meet with government officials, community groups and those with lived experiences from all

over the world and to discuss key issues affecting women and girls.

The Canadian delegation was led by the federal minister for Women and Gender Equality, the hon. Maryam Monsef. Representatives from civil society and labour unions from across the country were also in attendance, including leaders from the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour.

Mr. Speaker, events I attended covered a range of issues, including the role of modern technologies in preventing sexual and gender-based violence, the importance of access to public services in terms of violence prevention and global commitments to advance women and girls.

I also met with my national colleagues to discuss how we can continue to work together on initiatives of gender equality and violence prevention in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to be committed to advancing the status of women and girls in our province. These events and discussions from the UN Commission on the Status of Women nurtured ideas and relationships for the betterment of women and girls here in our province and around the world.

Thank you.

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 her statement. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that when a group of individuals come together, they can join forces to enact great change. I'm optimistic that gatherings such as the 63rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women can help to advance solutions for women and girls all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, our attention is often given to what lies in the community surrounding us, but we must not forget the women and girls all throughout the globe who are facing challenges. The UN Commission is a unique group which allows the challenges and solutions to be shared among those trying to make a difference.

I hope that the minister and those attending from the province are able to bring key information and best practices back to the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister. It's great that the minister had a chance to attend the UN meeting, but unless she is committed to real action for the women of Newfoundland and Labrador it is a waste of taxpayers' money.

Women's groups across the province have been pushing for pay equity, an increase in minimum wage –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – to \$15 and funding for the Norpen Aboriginal Women's Circle proposal for a women's centre in Port Saunders.

A key issue in women fleeing violent situations is lifting women and children out of poverty. That is committing to really advancing the status of women and girls in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Natural Resources

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the opening of Beaver Brook Antimony Mine in Central Newfoundland –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: – creating approximately 100 new jobs for the people of the province.

On March 8, I had the pleasure of joining the Premier, my colleagues, including the Minister of Health and Community Services, and representatives of Beaver Brook mine and China Minmetals Rare Earth Group for the official opening ceremony and to celebrate this significant announcement for the people of the region and the mining industry as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, some 160,000 tons of antimony ore per year will be mined at full production and processed into concentrate. The direct and indirect impacts of Beaver Brook mine will be felt throughout the area, demonstrating that by working together, we are able to unlock our natural resource wealth and create new opportunities for tradespeople, engineers and many other fields.

The reopening of Beaver Brook mine is another example of how our plan, *Mining the Future 2030* is working to grow Newfoundland and Labrador's mining industry and, in the process, create jobs throughout the province in collaboration with communities, Indigenous governments and the industry.

Mining is a major contributor to our economy. In 2019, the mining sector is forecasted to employ a total of 6,300 people – an 11 per cent increase from 2018. Also, the gross value of mineral shipments in Newfoundland and Labrador is forecasted at \$4 billion for 2019, a 47 per cent increase since 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, a world of possibilities is at doorstep because our geology positions Newfoundland and Labrador to be a

global supplier of minerals. We are very pleased with China Minmetals Rare Earth Group's continued interest in Central Newfoundland and we hope for a long, safe and prosperous future for the company, its workers and its communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the copy of her statement. The reopening of Beaver Brook Antimony Mine is great news for the mining community of this province. It's a welcome addition to the Central Newfoundland economy. The approximately 100 new jobs in the region are certainly significant. I congratulate officials with Beaver Brook mine and China Minmetals Rare Earth Group on their reopening.

Mr. Speaker, mining development starts with geoscience and exploration. I'd like to take a moment to encourage the minister to help keep this in mind as the government makes decisions on the upcoming budget. I urge you to ensure that geoscience and exploration programs are continued for the benefit of the industry throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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. It's good to see this mine reopened and good to see the creation of 100 new jobs with all the economic spin-off benefits which will ensue for the region. Media reports the company who owns the mine is concerned with hiring enough

qualified labour to ensure they get up to full production. I hope government programs will help with that.

There also seem to be questions about the life of the mine. Conflicting media reports project the lifespan to be 3½ or 15. I ask the minister: How long will it be?

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, thank you.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has stated the Department of Justice covered the cost of legal fees he incurred while being investigated by the commissioner for Members' interests for alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

By what authority would the Justice Department cover the legal fees of a Member?

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

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

As was reported in the media last week, the legal fees coming through, I guess we'll call the situation, did come to the Department of Justice and would have been referred to an assistant deputy minister. After, I guess, a significant period of time, a number of Members involved in this situation brought their legal fees to the Management Commission who has voted to ensure that all Members are compensated for legal fees incurred in this matter.

What I can advise is that now that the procedure has been established, this bill that would have been incurred by the legal counsel for the Member, it's going to be sent to the Management Commission to be dealt with by

Management Commission as the other bills were.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the hon. minister for that information.

I take it then that the minister is confirming something that was said by the Speaker publicly when he stated I can tell you the Management Commission has not reimbursed him and that would be the only venue for him to seek and receive revenue.

The minister is confirming that, is he?

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

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

No, there are situations where Members of this House have been dealt with. In fact, former Premier Dunderdale was actually sued in civil court at one point and her legal bills were dealt with by the department.

The fact is that when this matter happened there was no process by which – again, the Management Commission had not seen this. Now what we have is a situation – we’re coming out of this. There will be, from the Privileges and Elections Committee, brought forward a procedure to handle situations like this in the future.

In the meantime, since all this has happened, the Management Commission has covered the legal fees for all Members involved in this process and that will soon be looking at the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands legal bills as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the media is reporting that the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands requested his legal fees be covered the day after he was removed from Cabinet and the Liberal caucus.

Can the minister state whether that is the case?

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

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

I cannot state for certain exactly what day this would have happened. The procedure is there would have been a conversation, and the same as I would do in any case, I immediately referred it to the assistant deputy minister for this matter. After that, the matter went through that process. There would have been – looked at by policy, was examined, a decision made. In fact, when the bill was paid, I wasn’t even aware that it had happened.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: There may be an issue with my hearing, but I wonder if the minister can confirm what he just said.

Did he state that the bill was paid?

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

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

It is my understanding that the legal fees incurred by the Member have been paid. I wouldn’t even be able to tell you the date. The fact is that the department often handles outside counsel when it comes to any number of legal matters, whether it’s departments, Members, you name it. It’s anywhere in the range of \$3 million to \$7 million on an annual basis.

What I can say is I'm not aware when these bills are paid. That's handled throughout the department and under the auspices of the assistant deputy minister responsible for that particular heading.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Can the minister state whether the payment was carried out pursuant to a minute in council or an order in council?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm if it was either of those. Again, it was handled as for the department. Once the request came in, all I did was simply refer it on. It's not a decision that I make per se, usually we let public servants handle those types of issues. The same as any minister that has been served with civil litigation papers, it's handled by the civil staff.

What I can say, and I guess the underlying or overlying message here is that at the end of the day, the Management Commission has made a decision to ensure that legal fees for all Members involved in this process, Members from both sides, complainants and respondents, have been covered by the Management Commission under this matter; and, at the end of the day, it all comes from the same pot of money, which would be the Treasury.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister, as a Member of the Management Commission, will be able to acknowledge that what the Management Commission decided was to pay the legal fees, within reason, of those who

submitted them. This particular Member did not do so.

Was an invitation extended to the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, who is also a minister at this time, to provide her legal bill to the Department of Justice?

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

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

No invitations were extended to anybody in this particular case. At that time in the process, a conversation was had, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, the minister at the time, passed this matter on to the department. It went through that process.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Did the minister or his officials contact the Speaker or the Speaker's office or others in the House of Assembly regarding the request prior to or subsequent to the payment?

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

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

I'm not sure what the Member is going at here. No, I had no contact with the Speaker or other Members of the House. This is a request that came into the department. It was handled as per course.

The fact is since that time – as the Member knows, the Leader of the Official Opposition sits on the Management Commission. They have looked at the claims that have come in and made a decision to pay the legal fees for each Member incurred. At this time, now that a procedure has been established, I'm sure that the fee from the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands will go to Management Commission, because at the end of

the day, this all comes from the same pot of money, which would be the general Treasury.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Could the minister oblige us by explaining how it is that the procedure we were all familiar with at the Management Commission for dealing with legal fees submissions of Members was not followed in this particular case and he did not inform the Management Commission thereof?

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

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

I'm not sure if the Member opposite is trying to question whether I informed the Management Commission or something. I'm not sure if he's trying to imply something here, because if he is, he should be a little more clear with what he is saying.

The fact is a request came in to the department, it was handled. In fact, once I made the initial request of information to the department I literally had no other dealings with that matter at any point and did not know where that matter was going. I sat on Management Commission and dealt with that process, and that's basically what I can inform the House at this point.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, this province is contemplating significant auto insurance changes and the Insurance Bureau of Canada is now pursuing a marketing campaign to push for caps on minor injuries as a way to moderate rates.

Is the minister aware that the IBC acknowledges that its marketing campaign has been using a comparison of rates between New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador which is stale and needs updating?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm very well aware of the media. My staff and myself have been very involved in this file, and we've met with numerous groups and organizations. We are following the media. We have a 166-page document from the PUB, which is a very comprehensive document. There is significant information available to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I fear that this recent information about recent rate hikes in New Brunswick is not available from the PUB report. They have an injury cap system similar to what the insurance industry wants this government to impose on drivers here.

Is the minister aware that between 2016 and now most insurance companies in New Brunswick have raised rates or applied to raise rates very substantially?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm very well aware of the information that is available to us, myself and my staff, and we have a process to work through here.

The Member opposite is very well aware of how legislation is brought into this House of Assembly, and we will use all information that we can obtain and that's available to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I take it then that the minister is aware of the CBC story posted on March 15 which cites the example of New Brunswick's largest insurer which has raised prices by 23 per cent since 2016 and says it needs another 16 per cent increase.

Will the minister undertake to the House she will fully inform herself of the situation with respect to recent rate increases in New Brunswick?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Of course, Mr. Speaker, we will, I will and my staff will. And if the Member opposite happens to have any information that he feels that I don't have or my staff don't have, I would certainly welcome him to table it here in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, media reported that a consulting firm headed up by the former deputy minister of Natural Resources had been given a sole-source contract by Nalcor valued at \$336,000 a year.

I ask the minister: Did Nalcor consult you on this so-called sole-source, specialized service contract?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will speak to the company of Aberdeen International Associates. The former deputy minister of Natural Resources is a globally recognized leader in oil and gas development and had significant dealings with the re-establishment of the United Kingdom, for example, in the oil and gas industry, and he worked very diligently in the department to

attract new investment, to bring projects under line, and to move forward with *Advance 2030*.

So, he has a global reputation and is doing contract work for Nalcor oil and gas company. Under contract, his firm, Aberdeen International Associates, is well regarded and well known.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind all Members, please, there's to be one conversation on the floor – the Members in the corner, thank you, one conversation in Question Period, please.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Why did the minister support Nalcor hiring a consultant at \$336,000 without a competition to pursue the *Advance 2030* strategy? Surely there is someone already within our oil and gas sector in this province who has the experience to fill this position.

Why not go and advertise the position?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that the direction that we're taking with oil and gas is to really drive the growth of the industry and we really want to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador maximizes its opportunity.

We have said in *Advance 2030*, for example, we want to drive from 230,000 barrels a day to over 650,000 barrels a day. That's significant growth that'll bring tremendous opportunities to the province in terms of jobs and growth opportunities, as well as taxation and royalty benefits.

So, having that international expertise, that global awareness, is very, very important. We compete around the world for the investments that are being made, and we certainly will continue to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our industry is global in nature and the people that work in there are global as well, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So I ask the minister specifically: What specialized services did this individual have that disallowed you from going for a public competition for people here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the individual that the Member opposite is referring to is globally known. He has been a leader in the oil and gas industry for some 30 years. He's very familiar with Newfoundland and Labrador's opportunity. Nalcor does budget its own consultation. This is within that budget, its own consultation services. I think it will be beneficial to the people of the province to have a global industry leader to continue to advance the opportunities within the oil and gas industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding the former deputy minister, as a consultant, will be making more than the current vice-president responsible for the entire Oil and Gas division.

I ask the minister: How does she justify a consultant making more than the individual responsible for the entire oil and gas portfolio?

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

MS. COADY: I don't believe his information is correct, Mr. Speaker, but I will say this, again, Nalcor budgets for its own consulting services and this is within their consulting budget. They make those decisions around the consultants they require and around the payment that they are going to make.

I will say this, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Newfoundland and Labrador deserves to grow its oil and gas industry, to advance its opportunities to really drive both royalties and equity and taxation benefits to the people of this province, as well as to have a robust jobs that are well known in the industry. And we've talked about that in *Advance 2030*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the former deputy minister, our understanding, will work from Scotland and will travel back and forth to Newfoundland to continue to serve on the oil and gas council and continue to travel for the MOUs signed with Guyana and that industry there.

I ask the minister: What is the anticipated travel cost over and above the \$336,000 salary?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding that this is a total contract. So whoever is employed within Aberdeen International Associates will have to work within that total budget, Mr. Speaker.

I will say this, we did talk at length last week about the expanded role of the new oil company, looking at growing the supply and service industry which will bring increased opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador, and making sure that we're really taking

advantage of all the opportunities we have in our offshore oil and gas sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial Conflict of Interest Act states: A person who within the previous year was a public office holder shall not enter into a contract to receive benefit from an agency or the Crown with which he was employed within the previous year.

The former deputy minister has been given a conflict of interest waiver by Cabinet through an OC.

I ask the minister: Why did she feel it was necessary to ask her Cabinet colleagues to waive the conflict of interest regulations, legislation and the rule in place today.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Waivers under the Conflict of Interest Act are not uncommon. They do occur. You have to remember that this individual, through his company, Aberdeen International Associates, will be working for a Crown corporation. That Crown corporation has an expanded role, a role to help us continue to grow and develop our offshore oil and gas industry.

Therefore, it made sense to waive that conflict of interest. It's not uncommon, as I say, Mr. Speaker. It happens all the time. But, remember, it's with a Crown corporation, so a lot of the work that he would have been known to have been doing within the department is not in conflict with what he will be doing with the Crown corporation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government committed to implementing a single entry Medical Transportation Assistance Program and proudly reported in *The Way Forward* document that it is completed. Yet, we are hearing many stories of problems with the new program where people have missed or have had to reschedule medical appointments, as well encountering various other delays.

I ask the Premier: Is this the standard he expects in implementing *The Way Forward* commitments?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Medical transportation is a significant issue in this province and we have amalgamated to pre-existing programs. I will admit there were challenges, and I'm not here to defend things that shouldn't be defended, but essentially we have rectified those. We are now down to a 48-hour turnaround for all urgent requests for transportation and two weeks for everything else. We have 750,000 claims for travel each year, Mr. Speaker. We are making a difference and we'll get better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Way Forward states that the changes to the Medical Transportation Assistance Program was to improve the efficiency and timelines of services. Given what we have seen the changes

were hastily implemented, service delivery has not improved and, in fact, has worsened.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Isn't this another example of a failed forward by this government?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question and the strained alliteration.

From my point of view, Mr. Speaker, we have come through a difficult transition. We have a turnaround time of 48 hours for emergency requests for transportation, two weeks for everything else. We have 300 calls a day; 750,000 visits a year. We have enormous opportunities now to look at how to make this service a lot better to meet the medical needs of people and be less like a bus service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister admit that the new cataract surgery policy announced almost two months ago was really just an election ploy?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

The changes we have made to the cataract surgery is an issue of access. We heard very clearly from ophthalmologists, from people in various parts of the province, that they wanted this. This now gives people the option to have the surgery done in accredited, private offices, as well as an RHA facility if that's the way they want to go.

We will have the regulations changed. We are in active negotiations with the NLMA, almost on a weekly basis around the fee structure. We will have this done and done shortly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding is the policy can be implemented as soon as a billing fee code is in place.

Why doesn't the minister take immediate action to reduce red tape that is preventing people from getting cataract surgery more quickly?

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

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

The issue is not one of red tape. It's about patient safety. It's about accreditation. Those are not bureaucratic issues to be skipped or pushed aside.

We have just renovated the *Patient Safety Act* in this province and brought in a landmark piece of legislation. That is a key piece of this. That will be done. The due diligence will be done. The fee code issue is an ongoing matter of negotiation with the NLMA and we're working on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After talking to a number of the cataract surgeons here, there's never been a patient safety issue here. It's about moving it to the next level so that more expedient approaches and access to cataract surgery can be offered.

Mr. Speaker, the minister alleged publicly that there were potential criminal activities related to physicians providing cataract surgery outside of a hospital; yet, a recent Supreme Court ruling found that it was not illegal for physicians, like Dr. Chris Jackman, to remove cataracts in private clinics.

Will the minister do the right thing and publicly apologize to Dr. Chris Jackman?

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

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

The Member opposite continues to mix up two entirely separate issues. The issue of cataracts being performed outside of an RHA facility is one we are actively working on and are making progress on and will have that done in short order.

The other issue was an issue of public concern brought to my department about what seemed to be charges that no one could explain around what was supposedly a publicly insured service. They are two separate issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Supreme Court would differ with your opinion of the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, last month the Supreme Court ruled that the Health Research Ethics Board should render decisions on applications in 30 days, rather than the six months to a year it takes. The minister previously refused to get involved in this issue.

Will the minister finally be proactive and take steps to improve these timelines?

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

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

Indeed, I've met with both. One of the applicants for research there, Sequence Bio, as well as the Health Research Ethics agency itself. There are amendments proposed to the Health Research Ethics act; it is due for its five-year review.

We take to heart the ruling from the court, and we have committed extra resources to the HREA

to improve their timelines. They now have a separate committee, for example, to deal with genetic and genomic research. We'll continue to do that, and bring those regulations and amendments to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I quote the Supreme Court ruling: Fewer studies translates into fewer potential benefits down the road for the citizens of the province. Valuable medical research in this province either did not happen or moved to other provinces as a result.

I ask the minister: What is he going to do to ensure that the people of the province have access to life-saving medical research?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I could do little more than repeat my previous answer; but, essentially, we have met with the HREA. We have given them extra resources. They are working on streamlined processes. We are meeting the Cancer Care Ontario deadlines now for clinical trials, and we are working on the genetics and genomics piece, which was a piece of legislation they brought in to safeguard the interests of the people of this province, and I'm not going to let them go back on their word.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen the impact that this has had on the industry and potential life-saving research that could've been done here for the people.

I ask the minister – he’s committed to additional resources: Can he outline exactly what resources he is allocating to the ethics board to improve the services here and the timelines for ensuring that medical research is done on a timely fashion?

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

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

I’d like to take a little bit of an issue with the preamble there. There has been a reduction in some areas of clinical research in this province, but what the Member opposite fails to take account of is the fact that that has happened across Canada. It has happened across the globe in certain areas, as the whole pattern of clinical research has changed from previous, older styles, if you like, to what’s called real world investigations.

We have committed, and we’ve brought in successfully with MUN and partnerships there, significant sums of money to advance that. We are working with the HREA. We have supplied them with extra staff and resources, and we are committed to bringing amendments to the act before this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

Last week we learned that in the event of a failure of the Labrador-Island Transmission Link there is no agreement with Emera to supply the 300 megawatts required to supply the Avalon Peninsula at peak winter demand. The minister is quoted as saying there is an agreement with Emera for 100 megawatts, if they can spare it.

I ask the minister: Why doesn’t Nalcor have a proper written contractual arrangement with Emera for the supply of adequate back-up power in the event of a prolonged outage of Muskrat Falls power?

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

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

The Member opposite is referring to a 2011 report wherein Hydro at the time said they would make an arrangement with Nova Scotia for 300 megawatts.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member opposite knows, the Public Utilities Board is currently reviewing a report by Hydro called the *Reliability and Resource Adequacy Study*, that it will review the requirements should anything happen. I can advise the Member opposite, on a daily basis we do have an arrangement with Emera and Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, we are, on occasion, taking 50 to 100 megawatts, but we will abide by what the Public Utilities Board says coming out of the Hydro study.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

I say to the minister, even if it’s found out that Nalcor were to access this adequate supply, does Hydro have the capacity to transmit Nova Scotia power to the Avalon Peninsula?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, this government has a tremendous amount of respect for the Public Utilities Board and we certainly look to the Public Utilities Board to review the reliability and resource adequacy report that Hydro has submitted to them. We will rely on their expertise, their knowledge, their competencies to advise as to what should be done in the event – however unlikely that event might be – in the event that there is an outage on the Labrador-Island Link.

As the people of the province know, this is coming on stream in 2020, Mr. Speaker, and we're currently at present commissioning the Labrador-Island Link.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

I say to the minister, it's too bad they didn't show their respect for the PUB as soon as they became government.

Mr. Speaker, a failure of the LIL in the Long Range Mountains span could take weeks to repair. Nalcor has said in that event local shedding, better known as rolling blackouts, would be required. These blackouts would be devastating for the people and the economy of the Avalon Peninsula.

I ask the Premier: What plans has he in place to address this possible crisis?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take exception to what the Member just said that we haven't, since the beginning of our mandate here in government, really respected the Public Utilities Board. We have throughout this entire process. I remind the people of the province, it is this government that brought the Public Utilities Board back into Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: It was this government who looked to the Public Utilities Board for their expertise, Mr. Speaker. As I've advised the Member opposite, we are looking again to the Public Utilities Board for their expertise. They are currently reviewing the *Reliability and Resource Adequacy Study* provided by Hydro.

They are currently looking at that, and when they're finished they will advise what needs to be done in the unlikelihood that something untoward should happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: 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.

The Consumer Advocate has said unreliable Nova Scotia power in an emergency will likely mean building new gas turbines at Holyrood to the tune of perhaps \$500 million-plus fuel. He noted this flies in the face of the original reasoning for building Muskrat Falls to replace Holyrood.

I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Has she plans to buy these gas turbines and install them at Holyrood? If not, why not?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, this government has said repeatedly that we would never have built Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: And I can tell you the Premier of this province worked very, very hard to ask the right questions in this House of Assembly to determine why Muskrat Falls was being delivered at the very beginning.

I'll again repeat that the Public Utilities Board, with their expertise, with their competence, is reviewing the *Reliability and Resource Adequacy Study*. They will make the determination of if there are any requirements coming out of that study, and we'll certainly be listening to their opinion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling one order-in-council relating to a funding pre-commitment for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further tabling of documents?

Pursuant to section 273(3) of the *Elections Act, 1991*, I am tabling the Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Election Finances for January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to release its electricity rate mitigation plan without delay.

That will be seconded by the Member for Ferryland.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The private Member's –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The private Member's resolution introduced by the Member for Windsor Lake will be the resolution that we'll debate on Wednesday, Private Members' Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I have two notices. The first, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act, Bill 59.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I give notice, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the composition of the Resource Committee, the Government Services Committee and the Social Services Committee will be as follows:

The Government Services Committee will consist of the Members for the following districts: The Member for Torngat Mountains, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for Exploits, the Member for Ferryland, the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and the Member for Terra Nova.

The Resource Committee will consist of the Members for the following districts: The Member for Exploits, the Member for Bonavista, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, the Member for Harbour Main, the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Member

for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, the Member for Terra Nova, and the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

The Social Services Committee will consist of Members of the following districts: The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, the Member for Cape St. Francis, the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Member for St. John's Centre, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and the Member for Windsor Lake.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

The motion is carried.

I'd just like to clarify for the House.

Would you like to vote on this now or move it in debate later?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: This will require substantive debate, so we'll discuss it tomorrow.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

MS. COADY: Okay.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, my back is feeling much better the way I'm jumping up and down here today.

During Question Period, there was a question about travel, and I answered the question but I don't think I got it completely correct. So I wanted to make sure I did that.

Travel on behalf of the client is reimbursed by the client, so I wanted to make sure I made that clarification.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Bell Island ferry service provides a vital transportation link and is only eight minutes from port at any given time. Transport Canada regulations do not require individuals to exit their vehicles during the commute and the provincial government's current policy related to mandatory exiting of vehicles puts people at a higher risk of injury than the possibility of having to evacuate the vessel due to an emergency.

In May 2018, a risk assessment recommended that the Department of Transportation and Works continue to require passengers to vacate these vehicles while travelling on the Bell Island Ferry.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the

House of Assembly to urge government to hold public consultations to discuss the findings of the May 2018 risk assessment for the Bell Island ferry service with the people of Bell Island.

Mr. Speaker, we've had an opportunity over the last year and a half since this policy has been implemented to see the increased risk that this has added to those travelling, particularly those with medical issues and those who have mobility issues. We wholeheartedly argue about the fact that the risk is much higher for liability, the risk is much higher for injury than there would be of any possibility of ever having to evacuate the vessel in a circumstance that would dictate that you would have to get to the muster station and use the lifeboats – keeping in mind, as we outlined here, we're eight minutes from any given port.

In the number of outlined evacuations, particularly in the situation we're dealing with, 91 per cent of them are done either through the main deck, because they go into either beach or into a wharf, or themselves have a different avenue from being evacuated. We're not out to open seas. We're not on these processes.

I do know the minister is very sympathetic, and I know the minister has wanted to look at what needs to be done. Only a month ago we met with the minister with two very competent individuals who put together a risk assessment review and outlined some of the inadequacies in the risk assessment that was done to show there's a higher risk of exiting your vehicle on a short run, particularly for those who have medical issues and mobility issues.

We had professionals, Dr. Will Lorimer and his wife, Carol Lorimer, who have a background as consultants and who look at risk assessments and did a very detailed assessment of what was done by the consultant company and outlined a number of inadequacies and injustices that were done when they didn't address the key issues. And we've already had a number of potential injuries. We've already had people talking about legal action against it, but it's about quality of life. It's about the risks that are being implemented here that doesn't take into account a higher risk to the crew themselves, to government as a whole, and to particularly those travelling.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll get to present this again, but we do ask the minister to seriously take a look, talk to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, look at Dr. Lorimer's report and look at how we come up with a solution that works for the people of Bell Island, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the petition. I do recognize the Lorimers who are here today. We meet a while back to review this issue, but let me just put it in context first. This was an independent risk assessment that was completed last year on behalf of the department and there are a lot of things to consider here when you think about the fact that the muster stations are on the upper deck of the vessel and the vehicles are on a lower deck.

I do sympathize with some of the stories that I've heard around this and I think there is a conversation here yet to be had. We're still looking at it as a department. I do recognize the Member opposite, I discuss this issue quite regularly and it's one that I can assure him that, as a department, we're still looking at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition: Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province to still require an assessment and referral from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's (CAMH) Gender Identity Clinic in Toronto; the wait time for an assessment at CAMH is approximately two or more years; in recent years, other provinces have improved their in-province assessment and referral

processes, in addition to increasing coverage and funding for gender-affirming surgeries; without adequate MCP coverage, these surgeries can cost thousands of dollars; the Department of Health and Community Services is already engaged in investigating an in-province assessment and referral process; long wait times for gender-affirmation surgeries often contribute to prolonged gender dysphoria and worsened mental health; among transgender youth age 14 to 25 in Canada, 65.2 per cent considered suicide and 36.1 per cent made at least one suicide attempt in the last year according to a 2014 Trans Youth Health Survey.

THEREFORE, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: Develop an in-province assessment process for gender-affirming surgeries that would eliminate the need for an assessment by CAMH as the sole referral option; increase funding and coverage for gender-affirming surgeries through MCP; expand the types of surgeries covered to better reflect national standards.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the most disadvantaged, ignored, misunderstood people in our province and they have been pushing and pushing for this with the previous administration and now this administration. This Minister of Health has been in his portfolio now for 3½ years and he has paid lip service to this.

I believe he wants to do this but, Mr. Speaker, there's no reason on this earth why this is taking so long. It involves people's lives. When we see how important this assessment is – and again, we are the only province in the country that is using CAMH as its sole assessor. It's costing the province more money. It's costing our individual citizens more money and it is costing our individual citizens increasing amounts of stress.

The curious thing is that this won't cost the province any money. As a matter of fact, it will save them money. But this just keeps being left on the backburner as if these people don't matter.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what it would take for the minister to do this. He says it's imminent, but we've been talking for years. I've given him names of health providers who could

do this a few years ago. Mr. Speaker, surely heavens, the minister can answer this plea.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: The background to the petition reads as follows:

WHEREAS the successful proponents of the new hospital in Corner Brook are scheduled to be announced this spring with construction anticipated to begin this fall and, as this is estimated to be a four-year construction period, and as there is experienced local tradespeople and labourers in the area;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage companies that are awarded the contracts for the new hospital to hire local tradespeople and labourers, at no extra cost to the taxpayers, so that they can work in their own area, support the local economy and be able to return home to their families every evening.

Mr. Speaker, we're getting more and more petitions coming in every day because this is a big issue on the whole West Coast. As I said before, and I'm sure all the Members in the area are concerned, they want local people hired, local skilled people to do a great job, to spend time home.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give the government the opportunity because I have it from a good source, a very good source – there's a couple of companies that are out right now that I guess are going to be subletting and the steel that they are putting out tenders on and bids on, the steel is for 2020, not 2019. I'll give the minister the opportunity to stand up and say construction will start this fall as committed for a number of years.

Again, I'm just putting it out there because I was told by a very good source that the quotes that they're getting right now for steel is for 2020, not 2019. Before I make any further comments,

I'll let someone on the government side to respond to it because I don't want to go out and set off alarm bells and things like that.

So, I'm putting it out there. The people that came to me are in the know, and the people who are affected will be affected personally by this. They just want the information and the exact timing, because there was a commitment that this would be awarded this year and construction started in 2019. I'm assuming, by all accounts, that the government will fulfill that commitment to start construction this year. Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be doing my duty as an MHA if I didn't put that out there and let the government respond to it.

To all the local workers, Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that the fiasco that happened with the long-term care and the person who the government appointed to be their spokesperson, who committed that they'll be hired was never hired, so it will not happen to me again. This is why I'm going to bring this up on a regular basis to ensure that the government is well aware that the local people need the work here.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to present this petition on behalf of constituents in my area.

The Witless Bay Line, Route 13, is a significant piece of transportation infrastructure. It's a main highway and it plays a major role in the commercial and residential growth to the region.

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly to upgrade and perform immediate maintenance to this significant piece of infrastructure to ensure safety of drivers and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway to Route 10 on the Southern Shore.

This is a piece of infrastructure I've spoken on several times here in the House over the past couple of years in regard to upgrading. Prior to 2015, there were two sections of highway that were done. It was just under \$2 million that was done, one on the farther end close to the Trans-Canada Highway, and one on the other side close to Route 10. We had expected over the four years since that there would be certainly intermittent periods of upgrades which is required.

As I said, there are a significant amount of people that use that, commercial use, also those that travel back and forth for work in various industrial sites on the other side – a significant piece of infrastructure.

I know the minister – I made him aware of it actually a couple of years ago in regard to some of the conditions. To my understanding, he did tell me he did review it, went in, viewed it himself and saw some of the highway. At that time, they'd indicated that they would take a look. To date, there's no upgrades being done. Again, I got a lot of calls over the past week and 10 days in regard to large potholes, large craters really, and dangerous certainly in the nighttime, people spoiling tires, and certainly the safety of the overall public.

So, at the very least, I call on the minister to get some immediate repairs done, to get this into their so-called Roads Program. I've tried and tried again to find out where this road is rated, because the way their Roads Program works if you're not selected, the road is not rated.

So we don't know this piece of infrastructure, 24-odd kilometres, which is a significant link to the Southern Shore, where it's even rated and why it's not had attention over the past four years. I certainly call on the minister to address this, the immediate needs and look at, in this construction season, doing something to enhance it and meeting the needs of the people in the region.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There have been numerous concerns raised by family members of seniors in long-term care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those suffering with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions, whereby loved ones have experienced injuries, have not been bathed regularly, not received proper nutrition and/or have been left lying in their own waste for extended periods of time. We believe this is directly related to government's failure to ensure adequate staffing at those facilities.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to instate legislation which includes a mandatory establishment of an adequate ratio of one staff to three residents in long-term care and all other applicable regional health facilities housing persons with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions in order to ensure appropriate safety, protection from injuries, proper hygiene care and all other related care. This law would include creation of a specific job position in these facilities for monitoring and intervention as required to ensure the safety of patients.

Mr. Speaker, I've presented this now numerous times. Originally, in the last sitting of the House, myself and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi met with the group, Advocates for Senior Citizens' Rights, who presented us with a petition with 6,000 names and we divided them up in two bundles and we each presented 3,000 each. This time around, we were sent more petitions and the group has asked that as opposed to presenting them all together, we're getting them in dribs and drabs and so on, and they want us to present them on a daily basis.

So when I stand here on a daily basis raising this issue, I'm doing so on behalf of those people. It's not me standing up here raising it on a daily basis, it's those people who have seniors in long-term care that have concerns about staffing. Those are the people who want this raised on a daily basis.

So when the minister stands up, which he may or may not do again today, and say that I am doing a disservice to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador by raising these important issues, it is not I that he is saying is doing the disservice, it's the families of the people in long-term care who he feels is doing a disservice by raising these important issues around staffing for their loved ones.

We have to remember, it could be my parents or yours. It could be our grandparents. It could be one of us one of these days. It's important to ensure that there's appropriate staffing in place in these facilities to make sure that people are being fed, that people are being bathed properly, that they're not lying for extended periods of time after soiling themselves and so on, and that there's someone in place to make sure people with dementia, Alzheimer's disease are not going to be harming themselves or somebody else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day, Sir.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008, Bill 57, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Service NL shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008, Bill 57, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008," carried. (Bill 57)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008. (Bill 57)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time? Tomorrow?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 57 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012, Bill 58, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012, Bill 58, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012," carried. (Bill 58)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012. (Bill 58)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 58 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Whole to consider Bill 51.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 51.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 51, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act." (Bill 51)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

MR. LESTER: Well, Madam Chair, I guess in reflection of the last week's dialogue, I had an opportunity to ponder that over the weekend, and the weather also afforded me the opportunity to clean up around the yard. And by the time I had cleaned up, there was quite a pile of manure, and that brought me back to the minister's statement.

So I'm going to ask: Minister, did you consider the impact of this on corporate farm structure?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: What your considerations?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: I think he seeks a more fulsome answer than that, Madam Chair.

I believe the question, there may be a lead-in or this could be a segue to a larger event which may follow. So I will say that this amendment allows for good corporate governance, good corporate management, as well as individual management of farms, both whether it be sole partnerships or corporate structures.

The amendment in question that we're here in the Committee of the Whole to discuss is to allow farmers, those who hold agricultural leases, Crown lands, to be able to clear that land, clear trees in particular, forest resources from that land, and to do so, if they so choose, without a required prerequisite requirement of having a commercial forestry permit.

As we know, Madam Chair, right now under the *Forestry Act* those who would engage in a sale of timber resources in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador would be required to hold a commercial forestry permit. That is to ensure the good management, good practices and the regulated practices of our forest industry. It allows for a trail of compliance to be able to audit but, as well, to enforce those initiatives.

What we have recognized, what we have found from the agricultural community of our province is that there is another nuance, another circumstance which must be addressed, which is there are farmers who gain control of farming property, farming land, who need, of course, to be able to cultivate that land, would have to be able to clear those trees. At this point in time, and prior to now, that would require a commercial forestry permit whether or not a commercial sale of those resources was being contemplated.

What this amendment provides is for those farmers who would otherwise clear that land, if they do not intend a commercial sale of those timber resources, they can simply harvest those resources and use them on site, on property. Now, the question might become: Is it necessary for them to still hold a commercial forestry permit should they bring those resources off farm? The answer is, right now, yes, because there would no compliance mechanism. Enforcement officials would not be able to determine where that fibre had come from and whether or not it was, basically, a step around, doing through the backdoor what you could not do through the front door.

We anticipate that we will bring in future regulations that require additional thought processes we have established – by amending the statute, Madam Chair, we creating and we're setting the table to be able to create the legal

authorities to amend regulations. That does require some additional thought, some additional consultation with the industry itself, both with the agricultural industry and the forestry industry because the objective here is not to recognize that the table or the playing field is uneven and then to correct it by creating a separate and different unevenness to a different sector.

We accept and we agree that, after consultations with the industry, the agricultural industry have said the table is uneven; we have to have a forestry permit in order to be able to harvest fibre from our agricultural lands. This is not in any way, shape or form intended to be for commercial sale, so we are seeking an exemption, they said, from the act which we are now providing. But, on the same end, if we were then to provide an exemption for farmers, for agriculturalists, to be able to harvest trees from a significant portion of the land but then to be able to do so, without the requirements of a commercial forestry permit and then use it for commercial sale, that would create an unevenness in and of itself.

This amendment is well balanced. It meets the objectives, which is to allow farmers to be able to harvest wood and to dispose of that wood on their own properties without the requirements of a commercial forestry permit.

Now, should the property, should the wood itself be used for outside of the property, should the corporate structure, should the corporate owner of the farm or the sole proprietor of the farm wish to use the wood for a non-farm purpose that, of course, would be conceivably viewed by the Canada Revenue Agency as a taxable benefit.

The company or the corporate entity providing a taxable benefit to the farmer, should they use it, should the farm itself bequeath or gift property of the farm, then to be used for a purpose outside of the farm, that may – I'm not a taxation lawyer or an accountant, but it would seem to those who would be engaged in that process to trigger some of the requirements or some of the jurisprudence of creating a taxable benefit to the user.

That's why, Madam Chair, it is so, so important to get this right. We've set the table well. We're

amending the statute itself to be able to allow for consequential regulations to be put in place that could allow a disposal or a sharing of some of the wood on a non-commercial basis, but right now the objective here is, that which is for a commercial purpose, wood, fibre that is harvested for a commercial purpose would be governed and regulated under commercial forestry permits. Wood fibre which is not to be intended for a commercial purpose or have no further commercial concerns related to taxation would be governed simply under an amendment of the *Forestry Act* which would allow the farmer to harvest the wood and then apply that to the use and to the benefit of their farms.

Thank you so, so, much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Madam Chair, if the minister could clarify a couple of statements he just made. Basically I understood, and I stand to be corrected, that if the wood harvested on a particular Crown lease is removed from that Crown lease, is that still exempt under this proposed amendment, or is a permit required for the removal of that wood to another property or public grounds?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: That's what would be a matter of the regulations itself. We could foresee a transfer between an entity within the farm itself, within the farm. If a farm has two pieces of land, I can contemplate at this point in time that there would be an opportunity and flow within the corporate entity itself to move from one area of the farm to a separate piece of land, to transport it to a separate piece of farm. It would be then, the key element to this, which we would be very sensitive to, is enforceability.

Just as farmers would not want to have a situation where others could be able to engage in their line of business without the proper regulation and controls, foresters would not want that as well. The objective here is not to even out a currently uneven playing field by simply

creating a further unevenness in another direction.

So if it were to be gifted to an outside party, for example, that would be a contravention of the spirit and the intent of what is being done here today.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LESTER: In reference to your recent comments about gifting, through the briefing – which I thank you for – your department official was quite clear that gifting was not going to be permitted.

So could you clarify if gifting is going to be a consideration? So, I, as a farmer, or a farmer harvests the wood off their property, are they indeed allowed to give it to a charity or a case of charity?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: No, the official was indeed correct, Madam Chair, that gifting would be within – the current statutory amendment, which is being contemplated by the House, would provide an opportunity for the farmer or the corporate entity of the farm, or the sole proprietor or partnership of the farm to be able to harvest the wood without applying for and receiving a commercial forestry permit or commercial authorization by the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources for the purposes of using the wood on the farm itself or within the corporate structure within the farm structure.

But gifting is not – not – entitled under this particular act. By removing a permanent structure – and this is the important point. You can provide wood. If you're a commercial harvester or a domestic harvester, you apply for a permit and you receive the permit. If you then subsequently gift the wood to someone else, you provide a written authorization to the benefactor that this wood was harvested under this commercial forestry permit.

So there is a notion there – but under the commercial forestry permits itself, gifting is restricted. So where there is an actual possibility of providing a paper trail, a demonstration that there is a legal entitlement on a commercial forestry permit, if you are to sell the wood then the purchaser of the wood must be able to demonstrate that they have accessed to the wood legally and they're entitled to do so, and such would be the case here.

So by exempting the farmer from any sort of permitting, there is no record of any requirement or any permit or any authorization to be able to gift the wood in that particular case, there would no indication whether or not this wood would be achieved –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. BYRNE: I'm not sure, Madam Chair, if you might want to break in here at any point in time so that we can hear each other think.

With that said, there would be no written authorization to audit or to be able to ensure that enforcement officers can check as to whether or not this wood was legally obtained. That would create a situation where, as you can foresee, Madam Chair, that anyone at that point in time could say, when approached by a conservation officer and asked under what authority do you hold or possess this wood, they could simply say I got it from a farm and it was gifted, so therefore there is nothing you can do to enforce whether or not this particular wood was honourably obtained.

That's one of the key differences here, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LESTER: In the case where the farmer or the developer of the property, the agriculturalist, harvests the timber and deems it suitable for sawlogs and wishes to use for construction on a farm, what would be the minister and department's perspective as to how that wood would leave the property, go to a commercial sawmill, be milled into usable lumber and

returned to the farm? Is there any consideration of that situation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: That's an interesting proposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

We're having trouble hearing the speakers.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

One of the things that the farmer could do is they could apply themselves for roughly \$30, I think, is the current rate to be able to apply for sawmilling permit. They could do that on site.

It's a very good question. We're getting into the fine details of this as to exactly what would be the capacity to be able to take it off site, bring it to a commercial establishment and then modify, process the wood, and then revert it to the farm for an on-site use.

I'll endeavour to get back to the Member on that particular question.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LESTER: I'm still a little bit confused on the corporate farm structure. Could the minister address whether corporate farm shareholders will be exempt under this legislation amendment? Will they be allowed to cut wood for their own personal use?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: No, Madam Chair. The wood would have to be used on the farm itself. I would remind the hon. Member that he or she would then be subject to CRA reporting in taxation. If a farm were to award wood to an individual equity holder, shareholder, of a corporate structured farm then, of course, it would become a taxable benefit.

There would be two issues there that the hon. Member would have to consider if you were to be giving advice to other farmers. One is that the wood is subvent for use on farm work. If you trace back to where the wood was sourced and originated, and if it were to be transferred to the personal use of one of the corporate shareholders, there'd be two considerations that would have to be made: The wood itself would have left the property in violation of the *Forestry Act*; but, secondly, there would be a taxable benefit that would accrue to the shareholder as a gift from the farm for the personal benefit of the corporate holder.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LESTER: While I appreciate the minister's understanding of federal regulations – as I understand he's had several decades of listening in Ottawa – I really think that we need to clarify that.

When you go to a private ownership, a sole proprietorship, for example, is that the holder of that lease? Are they allowed to use the material, the wood, the fibre in their own personal woodstoves or for their own construction of their personal residence?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Madam Chair, I think the issue is well clarified. I think what the hon. Member is asking for is for a change, for an amendment. Currently, if the wood is taken off property and used for a support purpose other than for the benefit or for to be maintained on the farm itself, it would be in contravention of the statute. There is not regulatory capacity at this point in time to be able to accommodate that.

I have told the hon. Member, as I've told the farming community generally, that consistent with the consideration of that which is commercial must remain as a commercial regulation; that which is non-commercial must be non-commercial. But again, if that were to be the case, that the individual in question would receive a taxable benefit, it would have to be

reported to the Canada Revenue Agency as included as a taxable benefit on their income tax form, which I'm sure the hon. Member would be very attuned and quite anxious to ensure his own compliance with that requirement.

But with that said, Madam Chair, if again, given that there is a requirement to have an element of traceability, to be able to ensure enforceability, we cannot even an uneven playing field by just simply taking six inches off of one leg of the table when we're trying to correct another leg which is short by four.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LESTER: Okay, so without fairly considerable background regulations, this amendment really provides nothing more than the opportunity for the farmer to use the harvested wood as fence posts or, I guess, rudimentary construction.

There are no regulations around, or a provision to bring it to a sawmill. The farmer themselves cannot consume the wood for heating their own personal residence. The developer of the property cannot also transfer from one Crown lease to another, as there's no method to document where that wood came from.

Madam Chair, there have been several court cases in recent years in which the department has actually brought farmers, who were clearing land, to court, and basically tried to punish them for what they were doing with the wood. These court cases, fortunately, were unsuccessful.

I ask the minister – we need to clarify the details. I'll refer to the old adage: The devil is in the details. We need the details to come quickly after this amendment is put in place. Can he assure that will happen?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Yes, Madam Chair, we will.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CHAIR: An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

MS. COADY: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 51.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 51.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

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

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 51 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 51 without amendment.

When shall the report be received? Now?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, reported received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time, presently, by leave.

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, Order 2, third reading of Bill 51.

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, that Bill 51, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act, be now read a third time.

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

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to speak to this, while it seems as if it's a very small change and a very small amendment to the bill, we really need to look at the effectiveness of this. Through my questioning in Committee, I see that there hasn't been a whole lot of thought put into the background of how this is going to be administered, how this is going to be applied and, again, I really question whether this is just another tick box amendment to legislation.

Just listening to the minister's comments on Thursday past, his concept of agriculture is very politically theatrical and a little bit out of touch with the reality of what's happening on farms. One of his comments was: I encourage everybody to get out on farms. Well, do you know what? I think he should follow his own advice, maybe spend a couple of days out there working in the farm and he'll realize what it actually takes to clear a property and to take it from a raw piece of land and turn it into something productive.

When the minister speaks of that we're only 10 per cent self-sufficient in food; that is 100 per cent of the food we eat. I would aspire that we will not see sufficient climate change in our lifetimes to enable farmers of this province to grow tropical fruit. So, when you look at increasing or doubling the production of agricultural commodities currently produced in this province, you have to take into

consideration what effect that will have on the marketplace. To double production of something such as carrots or cabbage or turnips, or whatever it may be, even though we're still a long ways away from being self-sufficient, even a temporary market flood of a certain product has big, big economic and disastrous effect on existing farms.

So while he may have taken my comments and concern over government's haphazard plan to – well, plan to expand agriculture, it is not an anti-new-entrant sentiment.

My children are new entrants. I really hope that the support system stands there for them and others who would be so courageous to enter the agriculture industry and respond to the need to increase our food supply. This is not something to be politicized or put into a theatrical venue.

Farming is very practical, food production is very essential and right now all our food needs are being produced, are being supplied. Being supplied, albeit, by outside province, but do you know what's going to happen when a local farmer here in Newfoundland and Labrador starts producing that crop, starts producing that product? That's going to put an increased pressure downward on the actual demand for that product because those farmers elsewhere are still going to continue to produce product. Albeit only temporary, it will create a glut of a certain product and that will push the price down.

While the minister continues to not be comprehensive of economics, that farming actually has to be profitable in order to survey and thrive, and I understand that because his experience outside the political theatre is very limited. To the best of my knowledge, he has no experience of operating a farm or any type of business, and I do not mean offence to that, but that is from the platform he speaks about economics, economics of producing food. The economics of producing food has to be there unless we're going to go back to some sort of collective state farm in which the government pays for everything, which is not sustainable.

Why is it that these amendments are coming forward without the background put in place? This pressure from the agriculture industry to make this amendment so farmers are not

persecuted in their development of agricultural land has been decade and decade coming to the top and it was there the first day they took office. Now, we are here in the weaning days of the administration and, yes, let's get that in. Let's get that in, don't put a whole lot of thought into it but let's get it in. We done it.

Well, do you know what? That's a disservice to the agriculture industry. It's also a disservice to the enforcement officers who are going to expect to digest and interpret this vague amendment and apply it to farmers to the best of their ability, and it's going to plug up our court system. It's going to end up in more cases being thrown out of court. So, why is it that we have to go ahead with this amendment without the details? The details should follow in behind right away.

The minister had the opportunity to stand up. Minister, how come you didn't stand up and say that those details were on the way, that those details were being considered? Why? Because there was no answer to that. It wasn't thought about. Let's just make this fluffy little amendment, as I see most coming from his department. The minister needs to look at who is actually going to clear the land, who is going to put it in production, who is going to increase the food.

I can quote him in *Hansard* as saying: Food comes from – hold on one second. The minister, as per *Hansard*, stated: People eat food but they do sometimes take farmers and where the food comes from for granted. Now, that's one thing I do agree with him on. But what I don't agree with is we're changing that. Why is it that we, as a government, take credit for the hard work of the men and women of Newfoundland and Labrador who put everything on the line everyday and work themselves to the bone to increase our province's food security?

We should be humbled by people's efforts, humbled by young people who decide to leave, I guess, what is it you call, normal society, and jump into the field of agriculture. That is something that we should champion, definitely not take credit for.

Now, the politicization of farmers and the success of the industry have no place within this Chamber. We need to put things in place that are

functional. We need to put amendments in place within legislation that will allow farmers to harvest the trees off the property and use the proceeds or resources from that property to expand their agricultural operations.

Why is it that we continue to not back up our plans with the finances? The minister talked on Thursday of the increases in the academic field, the increases at Grenfell, which are absolutely fantastic moves by the way, but do you know what that's going to create? That's going to create increased competition for funds that are destined for farmers.

We've increased this whole level of academia, which is going to try to tap into agricultural resources through the CAP program or the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program – which, by the way, was decreased this past year in budget. They're going to compete with farmers who should be using that money to expand the agriculture industry and expand the sustainability of food in the province.

I'm not saying that academia will not be able to assist in that. It's just going to be increased competition. So while the minister stands up and says how great things are going and how this is great that we're having an expanded industry, expanded educational fields we need to put the dollars behind it.

If we're looking at doubling the agricultural production in this province, if we're looking at doubling the intellectual capacity, the education avenues available for farmers or would-be farmers or people who would like to work and support the industry, we're going to need, as administrators, as this government sits coming into this coming budget – I ask them if they hope to double agriculture, why, Minister, have you not committed to doubling the money available to farmers and the industry.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Are there further Members who wish to speak to the bill?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to take a few minutes to speak on this bill. I was interested in hearing some of the things the Member opposite had to say and I disagree strongly with some of the things he was saying, especially there at the end of his comments about the funding for research into agriculture at academic institutions like Grenfell campus is totally, I think, contrary to what is actually happening.

What is happening is we have farmers partnering with researcher at Memorial University to develop new crops and the way they can be grown in Newfoundland. I was at the opening of the functional food lab at Grenfell Campus just a few months ago, and I was amazed to see how they were working with farmers. There were several farmers there in the room that they had been working with to develop the marketing of their products, to look at the qualities of the products grown in Newfoundland and how they can enter niche markets; for example, blueberries and the quality and the taste and the way things look. Research and applying that academic background to an agricultural industry, in partnership with farmers, is an essential part of growing this industry and making things happen here in this province.

So I just wanted to make those comments on this piece of legislation. I would also say that the Federation of Agriculture supports this, helped develop it. The Forest Industry Association also supports it. So there was lots of consultation, lots of talks with industry representatives when this was brought forward. It's a very positive thing. It's a small change but many small changes make a big impact. I think this is an important piece of legislation. It may not be earth shattering, but it is certainly an important piece of legislation for farmers clearing land, wanting to eliminate some of the red tape.

I would encourage all Members to vote for this piece of legislation.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Are there further Members who wish to speak to the bill in third reading, Bill 51?

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?

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act. (Bill 51)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 51)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Order 6, second reading of Bill 56.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move second reading of Bill 56, seconded by the hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 56 entitled, An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others, be now read a second time.

Motion second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others." (Bill 56)

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today we're introducing the *Public Service Pensions Act, 2019*. In the last session, Mr. Speaker, we introduced the *Teachers' Pensions Act, 2018*, which represented the final steps in pension reform for the Teachers' Pension Plan. At that time, we said that we would be bringing forward similar legislation for the Public Service Pension Plan in this session of the House, and that's exactly what we're doing during this debate today.

In 2014 the previous administration, Mr. Speaker, working with the five largest unions, reached an agreement on pension reform. It's not often you'll hear me in this House give credit to the opposite side, but where credit is due I will give credit. So they negotiated pension reform with the five largest public sector unions and, since that time, shortly after that, governments changed and we've been working with these unions to put in place a system of governance that would sustain the public sector pension plan.

This system will ensure that once members of the public service retire, they will have access to an adequate pension fund. As part of the Joint Sponsorship Agreement and Pension Plan Reform Agreement with NAPE, CUPE, IBEW, the Registered Nurses' Union and Association of Allied Health Professionals, it was agreed that the plan would move from being a statutory plan, which is governed by legislation, to a non-statutory plan, which is governed by contract.

The new act will only retain those items and terms required to provide for the continuation of certain things set out in the Joint Sponsorship Agreement. So we're adding in references to the Public Service Pension Plan Corporation, which delivers plan administration services, the Public Service Pension Plan and the Plan Fund, to recognize the continuation of these parts of the sponsorship agreement.

The act will also contain reference to government's obligations to the supplementary account and to the pension plan, including our

obligation to a promissory note that will ensure that the plan is fully funded.

Mr. Speaker, what will no longer be in the act will be provisions relating to benefits and general plan administration. The provisions will now be captured in the non-statutory plan.

The pension sustainability is important for everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker. The unfunded liability, at present stage with the public service pension, is very large so the sustainability of the plan is important to everybody in the province. It's important for plan members to ensure that they have a reasonable retirement income. It's important to the provincial government as it gets pension liability under control. It's important to taxpayers as it reduces the financial impact by putting the plan on track to be fully funded within 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, we've worked hard with the public sector unions to get to this stage today. Over the past three years, Mr. Speaker, a great deal of work has been put into ensuring that we protect the sustainability of these pensions, that we put in place a plan to eliminate the liability. There's a plan that the plans will be fully funded within 30 years, Mr. Speaker.

We've worked very closely with the public sector unions in putting the plans in place to ensure that we get the public service pensions back on track and reduce, and eventually eliminate, the liability on the taxpayers of the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will welcome debate and comments from all sides of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to rise to Bill 56, An Act Respecting the Pension Plan for Employees of the Government of the Province and Others.

As the minister indicated this is, I guess, one of the final steps in regard to pension reforms that

were started a couple of years ago. In June of 2015, our administration, then with Premier Marshall and the Finance minister at the time, along with NAPE, CUPE and other unions, announced that an agreement had been reached on pension reform that had to do with ensuring the continuity and the viability of the pension plan due to the unfunded nature of it and how, collectively, together, a new entity would be created. How that would be managed by, not only the government of the day, but certainly the unions and where there would be joint management to make sure the fund, over a period of time, I think it was about 30 years, would be fully funded through joint partnership.

There was a promissory note required to be given to the Public Service Pension Plan by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and that was about \$2.685 billion and these, as I said, would be paid over that 30 years to ensure the stability of the Public Service Pension Plan.

Also, at that time, and different from in the past, it was just managed by the government of the day or Finance and Treasury Board, would manage the investments and would look at returns. In years of low returns, would have to determine how that shortfall would be made up – most cases it wasn't – and look at periods of higher return, how that would be reinvested and used to bring stability to the pension plan.

At that time, when this was done in June of 2015, it was announced, at that time, a commitment to joint trusteeship for the pension plan and that would be joint management on a go-forward basis. Government and the unions, at that time, would have joint and equal representation on a new pension board, which the government and unions would be equally responsible for, as I said, the liabilities and the surplus which occurred in the plan in any given year.

There was an overall management of that which included joint partnership which makes a lot of sense. These are the stakeholders that are involved, input from both sides and it would be managed collectively.

Legislative changes were made to the Public Service Pensions Act, which implemented these changes and the legislation was amended to

reflect other changes agreed to by the government of the day and the unions in question. Those were for things, changes in the legislation as pension contribution rates, what they would be, benefits and other post-employment benefits as would be reflected on a go-forward basis in regard to the pension plan.

At that time in 2014, the principles of the pension reform were to deal with the instability of the plan, to make sure over a period of time, collectively, it could be resolved and the benefits that's accrued to individuals that work with the public service would be available to them and they'd have the security that it would be available to them. All those benefits would be available to them and their family at the point of retirement.

The principles of the reform, at that time, were: a sustainable defined benefit pension plan, a reasonable retirement income for public services employees and a reduced financial impact on the taxpayers by putting the plan on track to be fully funded by 30 years.

There's a significant amount of investment that had to be made. I talked about the fact that it was a little over \$2.5 billion, so to put that amount in at any particular time is quite significant. The agreement by all parties is it would be done over a 30-year period with the direction and with the result of bringing stability to the plan. And having a clear plan in place, too, from the bond-rating agencies and the financial institutions that look at the operations of the province, knowing that there's a shortfall there – at that particular time, and as of today – in regard to meeting the obligations of the pension fund that gives confidence to financial institutions, to the bond-rating agencies that there is a plan in place. I guess, more importantly, too, that the stakeholders involved, the joint partnership to manage it, the liabilities and the surpluses over that period of time would be dealt with collectively and there's quantified, in terms of financial investment, what's required and there's a path forward for that.

So, that gives, not only stability to the fund, it gives stability to the financial markets in looking at our financial planning in regard to this particular issue of how we're doing and there's a

significant plan in place to see us through the challenge that exists.

In the past there were similar bills that were put forward and they would have been debated and passed in the House. We did one in the fall of 2018, but this bill here is also a result of pension reform. As I said when I started, it's the final step into bringing unions together and those funds that exist that they are a responsibility of government, that implementing a Joint Sponsorship Agreement which takes care of that.

The Public Service Pension Plan is now administered by what's called Provident¹⁰ It's a corporation that's jointly governed, as I mentioned, in terms of joint partnership, joint management by the unions and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The sponsorship agreement calls for the administrative provisions of the plan to be moved out of the legislation and into the plan text. The plan text is non-statutory pension plan, so it's moved out of the confines of the legislation and into an entity that provides oversight with Provident¹⁰.

The change to do that is in line with the joint nature of the pension reform. All of those that were engaged in this, stakeholders and supporters, are involved in the changes as we refer to is the plan text, but only the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador administers the legislation, thus it makes sense to have the majority of the administrative provisions contained in the planned text and not in the legislation, because that's where the joint management and oversight comes into partnership to oversee the Joint Sponsorship Agreement.

Some provisions, especially as it relates to legal issues, will continue to exist in the legislation, as I referenced. These include the continuation of the fund, the promissory note which is being invested, the supplementary account, commuted value, locking in and other issues as well.

While some of these will also be maintained and continued in the plan text, they're also contained in the legislation. These are legal requirements and legal ramifications in regard to the plan text – that's essentially a contract, and these issues

need to be recognized and established in the legislation and maintained there.

The officials, I certainly recognize them for the briefing they gave. They indicated as well you cannot contract outside of the law, so keeping this legislation provides certainty and as well enforceability in regard to those items that I mentioned that are part and will stay in the legislation.

The bill is intended to transition the Public Service Pension Plan from the statutory plan to a non-statutory pension plan. The Joint Sponsorship Agreement requires the plan to be exempt from the Pension Benefits Act, as it will no longer be a regulated pension plan. The bill, as we have it here, Bill 56, will repeal the current act and replace it with this bill.

As I said, my understanding is this is the final step in implementing the Joint Sponsorship Agreement, which our administration initiated in 2014 and we're following through over the last number of years in regard to the various unions to make sure we have a sustainable, clear and concise way forward to ensure the stability of this fund for the security of families and those that are involved in receiving benefits from this fund, that it's maintained and there's a clear path forward in how this would be achieved. This bill today reflects that process and brings to conclusion the overall process to get us to where we need it to be.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll finish my comments in second reading, but certainly look for some discussion and some questions as we get to Committee.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

I'm happy to speak to Bill 56, a bill that – as has been said by my colleague from Ferryland – brings to an end a process that began probably

going right back to 2014 with the Joint Sponsorship that he spoke about.

I'm not going to go into all of the details. He did an excellent job in giving the whole history of this. I thank the Minister of Finance for what he did as well. I don't think I need to repeat everything that has been said, obviously we are voting for this bill. I think we should be really proud of the fact that here in this province we've taken this step with regard to the public service pensions and, of course, the Teachers' Pensions Act as well.

I know that some provinces have done similar things in the past; Ontario, for example, has had separate bodies taking care of various pension plans like the secondary school teachers pension fund, which is quite a well-known plan. I think we should be proud of what we've done because we've given security to a plan that was in bad shape, underfunded. Not because of the workers, mind you. The public servants never shirked their responsibilities for their plan in the past, but they had to bear for many years the worry and uncertainty of a plan that really had been improperly managed by governments.

But this is setting things straight. This is making sure that from here on in there is security and there is stability. The one thing I would like to do – I know the Member for Ferryland referred to their government. And I've done this; I did this when we were approving the Teachers' Pension Plan. I want to mention Tom Marshall by name; he was the premier at the time when his government started the process in 2015. I think the workers of the province should be always be grateful that Tom Marshall had vision and that he understood the need for a defined benefit plan.

I will always recognize him for that and certainly recognize him, too, for the way in which he worked with the public service sector unions and with the teachers to bring this into place. Now, with the Public Service Pensions Act finalized, we have an end to the whole process. A process that brings stability, that makes sure that there is reasonable retirement income for public service employees. I think we have created a model here with the creation of Provident¹⁰ that all the unions took part in with government.

As I said, I'm not going to take a long time because it's all been said, the details of how we got to where we are. I'm very happy to support the bill. I'm glad to see that finally now everything is in place for all of our workers.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take very long, just to say that obviously I support the bill. It was a move that was made, as was referenced, by the former administration. I believe Tom Marshall was the premier at the time, if I'm not mistaken, or at the very least he was the Finance minister, and I think he might've been the interim premier. He did negotiate an agreement on pension reform, so this is just really bringing all groups in line with that.

It has big implications but, I suppose, you could argue in one way it's kind of housekeeping, but the implications certainly are large. Obviously, I think we will all support it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Any further speakers to the bill?

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

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Members opposite for contributing to the dialogue and debate on this particular piece of legislation. I believe it's a good piece of legislation. As I said in my introductory remarks, it will help stabilize the pension funds and reduce overtime, the liability, to eventually eliminating the unfunded liability on the pensions. It secures pensions for our valued public service employees, Mr. Speaker, so that they know that they can rely on their pensions

into their retirement years, and it will gradually reduce and eliminate the liability on the taxpayers of the province.

So I thank the Members for speaking to this particular piece of legislation. We look forward to continued progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 56 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others. (Bill 56)

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

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

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill "An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 56)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House

resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 56.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 56, An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others.

A bill, "An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others." (Bill 56)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There's no mention of pension portability in the bill. Just wondering about pension portability in and out of the public service plan, if it will continue, and will that be in the plan text?

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

That's a good question. I don't have the answer at the moment, but I will alert staff and I'll have an answer for you before the end of the day.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As well, section 5 of the bill deals with the pension fund and states that – I think subsection (4), I think it is, states that if an employer does not make a contribution, a penalty may be levied.

I'm just wondering, I think this is similar, I'm trying to remember, to previous provisions of legislation that was amended related to pension. I'm just wondering, can you outline what the penalty would be and who decides when and if that penalty is implemented?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: There is, under Provident¹⁰ which is where these pensions would be administered, there's a joint sponsorship body. So it's made up of an equal number of government employees, an equal number of representation from unions and so on. There is general public representation on the Provident¹⁰ board as well. So the joint sponsorship board would make those decisions.

I'm not sure if that adequately answers –

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

MR. OSBORNE: Yeah.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, thank you.

I thank the minister for that.

Another question I have in regard to section 5(6) notes that the assets of the fund can be pooled in the assets of other pension for investment purposes.

The question was: Section 5(6) talks about the assets of the fund and it can be pooled with the assets of other pension plans for investment purposes, I'm just curious is that currently occurring where it's being collectively pooled and being invested or is it invested in a one-off particularly related to each plan? Is there any joint, I guess, pool investment going on?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: I will await direction from the staff on that particular question, but I do have an answer on the portability. It will be dealt with in the plan text.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you very much.

Okay, so the portability issue will be outlined in the plan text, I guess it will be similar to what other provisions had been. Okay, thank you for that.

I had a question on – the bill indicates that the supplementary account is located in the Consolidated Revenue Fund and that the minister is responsible for it.

Can the minister give an overview of how this plan works and is it fully funded? I guess, where are we today in that regard, overall?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: The pension funds have gone to Provident¹⁰. There are promissory notes with the public sector unions and ultimately Provident¹⁰ to provide funding year over year to make up for the unfunded liability that's in the plan. So the unfunded liability will eventually be eliminated.

The promissory note is built into the fiscal forecasts of the province as an expense and that funding will be transferred to the joint sponsorship body or Provident¹⁰ to eventually eliminate the unfunded liability currently held as a liability on the province's books.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just if I could, thank the minister for that, and as well just a point of clarity. Section 25 deals with the Provincial Court judge's membership in the Public Service Pension Plan. My understanding is judges have their own pension plan.

Can the minister provide some details as to why the provision is contained in this act, in this particular bill?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: Answer to your previous question: Provident¹⁰ will be fully responsible for investment activities for the Public Service Pension Plan only. So I'm reading from that, that they won't be looking at merging plans or consolidating plans. It's the Public Service Pension Plan only.

In terms of the judges, if the judges are included in this then they would've been – because they're not a big enough body, is my guess, to be in and of themselves, they would've been included in the Public Service Pension Plan.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, so just to the minister's prior comment in regard to Public Service Pension Plan standing alone. I guess my question was in regard to pooling. I think your comment was that there wouldn't be pooling, per se, as the requirement is, it would be invested independently and in and of itself.

The judge's piece, I think there was some reference to the fact that before creation of the judge's pension plan, they paid into the Public Service Pension Plan, and maybe some judges

may still have a balance in the current plan. Therefore, I suggest that may be why it's referenced.

The final question I have, section 29 of the bill reads: "The *Pension Benefits Act, 1997* does not apply to this Act or the pension plan." I'm just wondering, can you provide some clarity as to why – explain why this is the case?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: Just for clarification on the judges, any judges that were there prior to 2014 under the Public Service Pension Plan are included through Provident¹⁰. Their funds would be vested through Provident¹⁰.

On the – can you repeat the –

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yeah, sure.

MR. OSBORNE: Yeah.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Just section 29 of the bill reads: "The *Pension Benefits Act, 1997* does not apply to this Act or the pension plan." I'm just wondering, for clarity, why that is so, why it does not apply to the act or pension plan?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: That would be a legal question, and I'm hoping somebody from the legal department would be able to provide an answer. So I'll provide it as soon as I get it.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 55 inclusive.

CHAIR: Clauses 2 through 55 inclusive.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 55 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 56.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 56.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise and report Bill 56 carried without amendment, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

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

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 56 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 56 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the report be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, Order 5, second reading of Bill 54.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 54, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 54, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law." (Bill 54)

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

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

What I would say to not only the crowd out there watching, but to all those assembled here in the House today, that everybody can finally relax that we've finally gotten to the most scintillating piece of legislation that will be debated in the House this session. Perhaps, at any point during this session, there will not be a bill as substantive, important, frankly, earth-shattering as this bill.

What I'm hoping is that when I'm speaking, I'm hoping that what's coming through is the sarcasm. The sarcasm font may be used by *Hansard* to show what I'm talking about. In fact, it's interesting actually.

The purpose of this bill, quite simply, is an act that amends errors and anomalies in other pieces of legislation. I actually will go into it a bit, but it's funny when you go through *Hansard* and read previous debates on this bill.

In fact, I read Mr. Ed Roberts, former Lieutenant-Governor, former Minister of Justice, someone well known from sitting in this House, reading his commentary from one time that when he was Attorney General, spoke to an amending act of this nature. He used tones and terms that were very similar to the one I'm using here today, which is meant to convey the fact that this is obviously a necessary bill. It's a necessary piece of legislation, but it's not really the most interesting piece of legislation we'll see in the House of Assembly. Basically, it's a bill that changes some words, adds some commas. It changes a number of things.

So what I am going to do, because I do find it interesting. The fact is we're amending a number of pieces of legislation here. So what I will do very quickly is just go through them and talk about the changes, just so that people can see that – again, before I get into it, I will give special credit to Legislative Counsel.

It's amazing, the commentary coming from the other side. I just heard a Member on the other side: lay it on me, we can't wait to hear to this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. A. PARSONS: I know they're interested, but you got to hold off. Take your time. I got a full hour.

I will take my time to debate this piece of legislation. No matter how interested you are in having it put forward, I will take my time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

I will say in all seriousness, not just this piece of legislation but any piece of legislation that comes into this House, we have Legislative Counsel working on this. This is a division of the department that when you talk about punching above their weight, they don't have a huge workforce but the amount of work they get done in making sure that bills come into this House – again, when you look at a bill, even a

bill of this nature, which is – we're literally getting down to the commas and changing simple words in huge, substantive pieces of legislation. That takes a lot of dedication.

So I want to thank those individuals. Again, Susan King is a person who sits in on the meetings every single morning. When we get ready to go into the House and what we're going to debate, she sits in on those.

In fact, there's somebody who is sitting at our Table here that used to do a lot of that work, sitting at the Table, Kim Hawley George. She knows exactly what we're talking about. She's sitting there in rapt attention as I go through this bill, because this is something she used to do. This is something she used to spend her time doing. I want to thank her for what she has put into this.

Even if I do say with a bit of jest – I talk about this bill. The serious part is this does require dedication. Just the fact when you're going through and scanning these bills and making the changes and working with the other departments. So I want to thank them.

This is the essence of the bill. When we talk about clause 2, we're amending the *Arts Council Act* to correct an error in the order of the definitions in that section.

We're going to amend clause 3, section 30 of the *Auditor General Act* to correct an incorrect reference to another act, which basically used to be *Public Tender Act*, we changed that to *Public Procurement Act*; therefore, we have to make this change.

Clause 4 amends a subsection of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* to correct the name of a department. Again, it used to be CYFS, now it is CSSD. These things have to be changed. They have to be amended to make sure they stay current and up to date and reference the departments for which they pertain to.

Clause 5, this is a piece of legislation – I'm responsible for a significant number. This is one I wasn't familiar with, is the *Coast of Bays Regional Service Board Order*. Section 2 of that bill has been amended to add words that were inadvertently omitted. So our apologies to the

Coast of Bays Regional Service Board, but we've added those words back.

The *Condominium Act* had a number of subsections changed to correct incorrect references to another act. That came out of the substantive change that was made when the *Registration of Deeds Act* was replaced by the *Registration of Deeds Act, 2009*. So a big change there; but, again, we've covered it off.

The *Energy Corporation Act* is being amended, because what we've done is we've changed the word: entitites to entities. Again, that's what we're talking about here. Legislative Counsel really fell down on the job here and forgot that typographical error in the millions of words they look at, but that's what we're here for. We get it right. E-N-T-I-T-I-T-E-S was corrected to entities.

AN HON. MEMBER: Riveting.

MR. A. PARSONS: They say riveting, but the fact is they're paying attention. They're listening, because they want to know where I'm going to go next.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: I know. It'll be a challenge, but I think I can do it within the 53 minutes I have left.

Clause 8 of the *Expropriation Act* was also changed referencing the fact that it went from *Registration of Deeds Act* to *Registration of Deeds Act, 2009*.

Clause 9 of the bill talks about the *Family Law Act*. The same thing; there was a reference to *Registration of Deeds Act*. We had to amend that. Clause 10 of the bill references and amends subsection 4(4) of the *Fisheries Act* to correct an error in cross-referencing. The *Forestry Act* – this is a bill that's very important to the Minister of FLR. The *Forestry Act* subsection 70(6), 70(7) and 70(8) will be changed to reference the previous noted change for *Registration of Deeds Act* to *Registration of Deeds Act, 2009*. As the old commercial goes, the more you know.

The *Highway Traffic Act*, we had a big change in that one. Again, coming from a person who

sat on the other side when I was in Opposition and we spent literally 24 hours debating “may” versus “shall,” the *Highway Traffic Act* had a typographically error. The reference to “insure” was corrected to “ensure.” So “insure” to “ensure,” that change had to be made. So I say to the Minister of Service NL, you're welcome.

The *Highway Traffic Act* also had to have the *Medical Act, 2005* changed to the *Medical Act, 2011*. The *Highway Traffic Act* also had the reference to “Lieutenant-Governor” was corrected to “Lieutenant- Governor in Council.” That's actually important, I think, because when we talk – that's two different things all together, “Lieutenant-Governor” versus “Lieutenant-Governor in Council.” So who knows the trouble we could have got in if that wasn't changed?

Another reference here to the *Highway Traffic Act* – there are a lot of changes to the *Highway Traffic Act*, which again, itself as a bill, is amended very often in a number of sessions of the House because we're constantly making changes, which is a good opportunity to throw a shout-out to the Minister of Service NL and her department and her staff who've been bringing forward pretty significant changes to that bill. Again, these are the things that come with that.

The *Medical Act, 2005* to *Medical Act, 2011* had to be changed. Clause 13 is repealed. Subsection 4(2) of the *House of Assembly Act* where it talks about the quorum, that's actually handled through the Standing Orders of the House, so that had to be taken out. The Standing Orders is something that I've talked about a number of times in this House and I'll actually be debating again on Thursday – looking forward to that.

Clause 14 of this bill amends the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* to correct an incorrect reference. This is also another case of public tender changing to public procurement.

Clause 15 talks about the *Interpretation Act* to correct another incorrect reference. Again, we brought in a bill last year where we enacted the new *Court of Appeal Act* so we had to correct a change that sort of, I guess, came out of that.

The *Labour Standards Act*, we had to make a change there. The reference to section in section 43.13, “section” was corrected to “Part.” Another change, the next one, *Labour Standards Act*, the Summary Proceedings Act was replaced by the *Provincial Offences Act*, necessitating a change to the bill to ensure that that was covered off.

This one’s important to the Minister of Natural Resources, Mineral Regulations, section 64 being amended, again coming from the Registration of Deeds Act. Another change to the *Mineral Holdings Impost Act* – not one that I deal with frequently – again, dealing with Registration of Deeds Act.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012 – so basically this is Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations were replaced by Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations, 2018. They added the year there, a change there. There was another change that came out of that in paragraph 443(3)(a).

This one would be important you, Mr. Speaker. The *Office of Speaker Vacancy Act*, clause 21 of this bill repeals that because that’s addressed in the *House of Assembly Act* and the Standing Orders, so unnecessary.

The *Offshore Area Corporate Income Tax Act* had an incorrect reference that came about when the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act was amended – boom, to every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The same thing applies to legislation when we talk about that theory, Sir.

There’s another change there where the *Income Tax Act, 2000* was changed, necessitating a change in the *Offshore Area Corporate Income Tax Act*. Clause 23 deals with the *Pension Benefits Act*; same thing, LG changed to LGIC. Clause 24, there were some changes in *Personal Health Information Act*, some cross-referencing errors that had to be fixed. The *Personal Property Security Act* had subsections 37 and 38 amended to deal with the Registration of Deeds Act; also the same in the Personal Property Security Regulations.

The *Petroleum and Natural Gas Act* will be changed by clause 27(1) of this bill to correct an incorrect reference to another act – again, another reference to the infamous *Registration of Deeds Act, 2009*. Clause 27(2) will amend the *Petroleum and Natural Gas Act* – again, dealing with the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act being changed.

Moving on to a different one: *Pippy Park Commission Act* – again, subject to the Registration of Deeds Act being changed to 2009. This is an interesting one. Clause 29 of the bill would repeal section 6.1 of the Provincial Parks Regulations because it is spent. That’s all it says there: because it is spent.

Public Service Commission Act was changed because Medical Care Insurance Act, 1999 was replaced by the *Medical Care and Hospital Insurance Act*.

We’re getting toward the end, Mr. Speaker. I’ve only got another 100 changes to go through – I kid, I kid. The *Status of the Artist Act*, that’s one that, again, the credit goes to the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation. The *Status of the Artist Act*, a fairly new piece of legislation, got to amend it.

The Public Tender Act being replaced by the *Public Procurement Act, Works, Services and Transportation Act*, again, deals with a change coming from the Public Tender Act and the *Public Procurement Act*. And finally, clause 33 of bill would repeal a number of obsolete or spent acts or regulations.

If we want to get into that, we get to section 7(k) and we’re getting down into “*Meeting of the Householders of the Local Service District of Burnt Point – Gull Island – Northern Bay Order*, Newfoundland and Labrador Regulation 7/18.”

A bunch of communities here. I feel like the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, when he gets up and reads his petitions, it reads like NTV on New Year’s where they name all the communities. So, this is very similar to what we’re dealing with here now. We got Piccadilly, Lourdes, Dildo, Bauline South, Burnt Cove, Burin Order, Northern Arm, Lance Cove,

Wabush, Lab City, Goobies, Little Harbour, and the list goes on.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate – and again, to those listening out there, it only felt like a half hour. I was only debating for 15 minutes. The fact is that I look forward to the Committee stage of this bill and any questions that may be posed by my colleagues across the way. Unfortunately, these bills, while they're not as interesting as some of the other pieces of legislation we've put in, they're quite necessary. They may be deemed housekeeping but they are also important.

So, on that note, I thank my colleagues for their patience. I thank the staff of Legislative Counsel and I look forward to the rest of this enthralling debate that we are having on *An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to compliment the minister on the details and exquisite lengths he went to to highlight the elements here and the changes.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, indeed.

As the minister indicated in the Explanatory Notes this bill, Bill 54, is about amending – before the House of Assembly here – matters in the statute law that require really legislative correction as a result of amendments or enactments made in previous sessions. And they are picked up by a staff, as the minister had indicated, and these errors collectively are brought together and listed here as changes and amendments to various statutes that would allow, I guess, proper grammatical errors to be amended, and names or various other types of errors to be corrected, and that's what this bill is about. List them out in detail, list the act. I know from my own area, there's a reference here to

Burnt Cove, a community in my region, related to the local service district and various parts of this.

So this is a necessary function. I certainly recognize what it is in the bill. While it's correcting errors, it is an important function. Those folks involved with putting legislation together, certainly over a period of time through amendments and various other pieces of legislation are brought to the House, do find these, and I'm sure make a list of them, and eventually get to be presented – I think on an annual basis like this – for the anomalies and errors in the statute law.

So that's what we're performing today. I don't think on this side we'll have any trouble supporting it. We'll move forward, and I'm sure we'll have lots of questions in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Any further speakers?

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

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

I am happy to speak briefly to Bill 54, errors and anomalies. I would like to thank the staff throughout the department for catching these errors and anomalies and simply catching up. It's very interesting, some people really have that skill and that attention to detail, and their experience and their expertise really hones in and shows us where there may be specific issues that might arise because of a misplaced comma or an alternative word or misplaced full stop.

So what this bill does it puts forward corrections in various statutes to errors and anomalies in legislation, which have, from time to time, been discovered. These corrections are technical in nature, but they still need to be passed by the House. That really points to the issue of how important the legislative work of government, of this House is, and how important it is to take the time to do the work thoroughly to ensure there aren't errors or anomalies that really affect the intent and the spirit of a bill or legislation.

What we're seeing are very minor amendments. I have no quarrel with any of the amendments that are proposed here today, but I do wish that government had had more of an appetite for substantive amendments to some of these acts that they require.

For instance, the *Arts Council Act* has not seen an overhaul since it was passed in 1980. That's almost 40 years. That's almost 40 years, Mr. Speaker, that that act hasn't seen an overhaul. When we look at our arts community which has grown in numbers, that has grown in sophistication and in scope, but their budget has not. Also, the rapidly changing area of arts. We see more and more people in film and television, multimedia, digital art. The fact that there hasn't been an overhaul in 40 years really begs the question, why not? Simply, what we're doing is we're just looking at some very minor details, minor anomalies, minor omissions.

The *Public Procurement Act*, which we passed not so long ago, but really had a missed opportunity in terms of looking at gender and also social benefit clauses, which is really best practices and what we're seeing all over the world; yet, although we have only recently passed and had an overhaul of our *Public Procurement Act*, government decided not to look at those areas, not to really update and make it a state-of-the-art type of procurement act. Missed opportunities. So I would like to point out that I believe that's an omission.

The *Energy Corporation Act*, with the advent this session of the *Oil and Gas Corporation Act*, we could have seen an opportunity to amend section 5.4 of the *Energy Corporation Act*. This section states that Nalcor may refuse to disclose virtually sensitive information of a corporation or its subsidiary. This clause is now found verbatim in the new oil and gas act. Again, we had an opportunity to do something different with that rather than these very – certainly, not substantive changes to any of the bills or acts that in fact might need to have those substantive changes.

Also, the government departments and public bodies which are covered by ATIPPA; if a public request for information is denied, the public body must provide an explanation as to why, and that decision can be appealed to the

Privacy Commissioner. However, in our *Energy Corporation Act*, those who are seeking information have to go to court.

Clause 16 of this bill sees a minor amendment to the *Labour Standard Act*. We could see a more substantive amendment dealing with the long overdue move to raise minimum wage. That's the kind of amendment we need to that particular act, Mr. Speaker, rather than just the very, very minor one that we're seeing. We could have seen an amendment that gradually raises minimum wage to \$15 an hour over a few years.

Clause 30 of the bill sees a small amendment to the *Public Service Commission Act*. We have recommended on a number of occasions, and with the *Independent Appointments Commission Act*, to see a gender lens and hiring practice. We could have seen an amendment to this act which would do a great deal to improve opportunities for underrepresented members of our society. That could have been a productive amendment as well; but, no, we see nothing substantive in that area.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, we have no problem with the act as it stands in terms of what it's proposing, but what I would like to say is what a missed opportunity. This is for errors and anomalies, I would also say omissions. What a missed opportunity to omit the opportunity to do substantive work on a number of these acts that are calling out for it and whose time has come to do best practices in a number of these different areas.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak to the bill here today in response to the Member for St. John's Centre, because she's particularly referencing a piece of legislation, the Newfoundland and Labrador *Arts Council Act* of 1980, and saying there isn't anything substantive that had changed.

We had recently debated that particular piece of legislation in this House that would allow for the entity to be in compliance as to how they operate in terms of allowing multi-year granting to arts organizations for sustaining funding. This is really important that this entity would be able to continue to operate in that way; if not, they would not be able to offer multi-year funding to artists and organizations within this province.

The Arts Council of Newfoundland and Labrador does incredible work in supporting our artists, and our government works very hard to continue to support them as well. Artists in this province – 5,000 people in the cultural community contribute \$450 million to GDP. That's quite significant.

The Member opposite did not mention once in her debate what is needed to be changed in the *Arts Council Act*. What is antiquated, or what is it in that particular act? Is she saying the entity and the organization with the act and the set up? Because the arts council was set up with a very specific purpose, to support the creation and dissemination of art to allow for artists to thrive here in our province, to have that mandate to create art for the sake of art creation and being able to support them in their individual endeavours. That's a really important aspect of that entity, and it continues to do so today.

They do an incredible job in being able to support individual artists. That is important. They also support and do sustaining funding and provide a number of other grants that they do. We brought that piece of legislation to the House and we debated it recently.

There was no amendment brought forward by the Member for St. John's Centre, but she gets up and talks about how there needs to be great change and great things being done. When the Third Party put forward their platform to support the arts, Mr. Speaker, the only thing they had in it for 2015 totalled \$526,000. That was their investment in supporting artists here in this province. Since we've been in government, we put an additional \$2 million just in the film corporation, supporting arts here in this province.

We support artists in our province to the tune of almost \$20 million, specifically in the

Department of TCII. Then we look across departments, like the Department of Education and other entities, as to how we support the arts. There are many things that we do, Mr. Speaker.

I fully support changing the matter here, and the errors and omissions and anomalies that need to be into place, but I just want to correct the record and have the same latitude as the Member opposite put forward as she brought up the *Arts Council Act*. We brought it before the House. We brought forward an amendment to that act just last fall. The Member opposite, I believe, supported that amendment and did not offer to make any additional changes. Maybe she didn't vote for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will be brief. I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Justice and Public Safety on bringing this forward and going through the act, or the changes. This takes me back to my university days in education and majoring in English. So this is very important, where you put your punctuation and what changes are made. It's a pretty tedious job that somebody has to do, siphon through all that legislation and find out what's applicable now and what isn't applicable.

There was a book that went out, and I'd recommend it to anyone in the House here when you're dealing with punctuation. It was a book called *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, and it was a zero tolerance approach to punctuation. It was written by Lynne Truss, and it bemoans what's happening with punctuation in the UK and the United States.

It's a fabulous book. Again, I say anyone should take a look at it and read. The title itself tells you what the importance is in terms of punctuation, because the title itself, it says *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*. It's based on an old joke around a panda bear who walks into a café, orders a sandwich, eats a sandwich, proceeds to shoot everyone in the restaurant and starts to leave. And, of course,

the one survivor asks the panda: why did you do this? And he said, well, look at the wildlife manual. Of course, in the wildlife manual there was a mistake. It was, rather than eats shoots and leaves, it was eats, shoots and leaves. So it highlights the importance of good punctuation.

So, I applaud the public service workers who went through this. It's a tedious job. Nobody wants to do it, I'm sure, but it's a very necessary piece of work that has to be done. We certainly support that and future examination of our legislation to this degree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly glad to rise and speak to Bill 54. I thought for a moment, I had to check – I thought it was a money bill when I was listening to the Minister of TCII. Anyway, there are 33 clauses here and I only have comments on 32 of them.

So, we'll start at number one. Actually, I'm only carrying on.

Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a housekeeping thing. Although, as has been said, there's no doubt a lot of work goes into it from the perspective of staff having to comb through legislation and make sure that all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed and the punctuation is where it should be, and that if there are any references to other pieces of legislation, that that is correct and so on.

I know if I was a person who was actually doing this work, I probably wouldn't be too pleased to hear Members stand up and say: oh, there's nothing to this, it's only housekeeping. They could say, yeah, you try doing it. The fact of the matter is, it is necessary and we do appreciate the work they've done to do this. As has been said, a comma in the wrong place can make a big difference to the meaning. Also, when you see things, even in legislation when you say something like shall or may, for example, it could totally change the meaning of a piece of

legislation or a clause within a piece of legislation.

So all this stuff has to be done. It is important. As I said, we're glad we have some good, competent people within the public service to do it. Obviously, we'll all be supporting this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I think I had my opportunity during my first comments to perhaps add some levity to this otherwise, what can be a dry debate.

I do want to thank my colleagues from across the way for their participation in this debate. What I will say is that, again, there were some good points that were raised by all Members, and I look forward to the Committee stage of this bill.

So, on that note, I will sit. I will take my seat and look forward to moving this into Committee and moving this important bill along.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 54 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law. (Bill 54)

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 54)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 54.

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

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 54, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law.

A bill, “An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law.” (Bill 54)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 33 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 33 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 33 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law.

CLERK: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 54.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 54 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

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

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 54 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 54 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

Given the hour of the day and the amount of time we've spent sitting here, I move, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains, that the House do now adjourn.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, 10 o'clock, being Private Members' Day.

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